PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
joint with the
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
and the
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: GORDON SONDLAND

Thursday, October 17, 2019
Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 9:30 a.m.

Present: Representatives Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, Heck, Welch, Maloney, Demings,

Krishnamoorthi, Nunes, Turner, Conaway, Stewart, Stefanik, and Hurd.

Also Present: Representatives Malinowski, Raskin, Bera, Cicillini, Connolly, Bass, Espaillat, Lieu, Hill, Deutch, Rouda, Deutch, Gibbs, Wasserman Shultz, Wagner, Welch, Mast, Tlaib, Ocasio Cortez, Jordan, McCaul, Meadows, and Roy.

Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[redacted]

For the COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM:

[redacted]

For the COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

[redacted]

For GORDON SONDLAND:

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THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's come to order. At the outset, I want to express -- I know what many of are of feeling this morning over the loss of our colleague, Elijah Cummings. There are few members, I think, that have ever served in this body who enjoyed wider respect and love among their colleagues as Elijah Cummings.

He was a dear friend to many of us. He was an inspiration to all of us. I spoke with him repeatedly while he was convalescing, and he was always offering his support and guidance and his superb example. We lost a giant among us. And I wanted to relay something that he -- a poem that he cited in his, as I understand, his first 1-minute as a new member of the House of Representatives more than 20 years ago by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays.

I have only just a minute. Only 60 seconds in it. Forced upon me, can't refuse it, didn't seek it, didn't choose it, but it's up to me to use it. I must suffer if I lose it. Give account if I abuse it. Just a tiny little minute, but eternity is in it.

That so typifies Elijah Cummings, who I think viewed every minute as a blessing and not to be squandered. And truly lived every minute as if it might be his last, and gave us just an incredible legacy.

So with your indulgence, if we could pause for a moment of silence in memory of our colleague, Elijah Cummings.

[Pause.]

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know if one of my colleagues in the minority might like to make a statement about Elijah.

MR. JORDAN: Thank you, Chairman. And let me just echo what you said. I think the folks in Baltimore, the whole State of Maryland, this town, and frankly the whole country are saddened by the loss of our friend. And he truly was a friend to both sides of the aisle.

And I will say, personally, I am, like all of of you, I'm going to miss him, I'm going to miss just debating with him, arguing with him, he was special. And it was funny, because we would debate and go at it in committee and then I'd see him in the gym and we'd be talking about the normal things that folks talk about. He was a good man. He was a good chairman. And, like I said, I think this whole town and the whole country is saddened by the loss of Chairman Cummings. So thank for the moment of silence and your words.

THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you, Mr. Jordan, and we did some soul searching about whether we should, or could, go forward today, but I think we felt that he was so dedicated to his work that he would want the work to continue, and so we plow forward.

Good morning, Ambassador Sondland, and welcome to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which, along with the Foreign Affairs and Oversight Committees, is

conducting this investigation as part of the official impeachment inquiry of the House of Representatives. Today's deposition is being conducted as part of the inquiry.

In light of attempts by the State Department to direct you not to cooperate with the inquiry, the committee had no choice but to compel your appearance today. We thank you for complying with the duly authorized congressional subpoena. After creating and operating a successful hotel business, the Senate confirmed Ambassador Sondland on June 28, 2019, to serve as Ambassador -- oh, sorry, 2018. If it had been 2019 it would be a completely different circumstance -- to serve as the Ambassador to the European Union in Brussels.

Ambassador Sondland's appearance today under subpoena, as a result of the State Department's decision, in coordination with the White House to obstruct the impeachment inquiry by directing the Ambassador at the 11th hour not to appear on October 8th for his scheduled deposition. The committee was therefore forced to issue a subpoena for Ambassador Sondland's appearance today.

In the intervening week, the committee has collected important evidence and learned a great deal of new information, including through powerful and detailed testimony of Ambassador Yovanovitch, Dr. Fiona Hill, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent, and Ambassador McKinley. The committee will also hear from Ambassador Bill

Taylor, our Charge d'Affaires in Kyiv next week, among others.

And, Ambassador Sondland, we look forward to hearing your testimony today about your involvement in Ukraine policy and efforts to secure a White House meeting with President Zelensky, as well as the July 25 call between President Trump and Ukrainian President Zelensky, and the documentary record that has come to light about efforts to get the Ukrainians to announce publicly investigations into two areas President Trump asked President Zelensky to pursue: the Bidens and the conspiracy about Ukraine's purported interference in the 2016 U.S. elections.

Before I turn to committee counsel to begin the deposition, and I know your counsel has some things to put on the record, I invite the ranking member to make any opening remarks.

MR. NUNES: Ambassador, welcome. Thank you for being here today. Before we begin, I'm going to yield to Mr. Jordan for our opening statement, but I just want to raise to the majority that both Foreign Affairs and Oversight were informed of these new meetings next week. I would just state that if we're going to continue this circus, I, at least, would like to know what time the circus begins. I don't know if that was done on purpose to the Intelligence Committee Republicans, but my colleagues from both Foreign

Affairs and Oversight were notified. So I hope in the future, that we learn at the same time that other colleagues know about the start times. And with that, I will yield to Mr. Jordan.

MR. JORDAN: Thank you. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Ambassador, thank you for being here today. Thank you for your service to our country. On September 24th, Speaker Pelosi unilaterally announced that the House was beginning a so-called impeachment inquiry. On October 2, Speaker Pelosi promised that this so-called inquiry -- impeachment inquiry, would treat the President with fairness.

However, Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and the Democrats are not living up to that basic promise. Instead, Democrats are conducting a rushed, closed-door, and unprecedented inquiry.

Democrats are ignoring 45 years of bipartisan procedures, procedures that were designed to provide elements of fundamental fairness and due process in past impeachment inquiries, and the majority and minority had coequal subpoena authority and the right to require a committee vote on subpoenas. The President's counsel had a right to attend all depositions and hearings, including those held in executive session. The President's counsel had the right to cross-examine witnesses, the right to propose witnesses. The President's counsel also had the right to present evidence,

object to the admission of evidence, and to review all evidence presented both favorable and unfavorable.

Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Schiff's so-company impeachment inquiry has none of these guarantees of fundamental fairness and fundamental due process. Most disappointing. Democrats are conducting this so-called impeachment inquiry behind closed doors. This seems to be nothing more than hiding this work from the American people. The 330 million people who are represented by Members of Congress don't get to see any of it.

If Democrats intend to undue the will of the American people, just a year before the next election, they should at least do so as transparently, and be willing to be accountable for their actions. With that, I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you, and I will yield to my counsel. I do want to point out that we are following all the deposition notice requirements, and indeed, the same requirements that the now minority observed when they were in the majority. Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the deposition of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, conducted by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, pursuant to the impeachment inquiry announced by the Speaker of the House on September 24th.

Ambassador Sondland, could you please state your full

name and spell your last name for the record.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Gordon David Sondland, S-O-N-D-L-A-N-D.

MR. GOLDMAN: Along with other proceedings in furtherance of this inquiry, this deposition is part of a joint investigation led by the Intelligence Committee in coordination with the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Oversight and Reform. In the room today are minority staff from the Oversight Committee. The majority staff are mourning together the loss of Chairman Cummings and will not be here today. In addition, there is majority staff and minority staff from both the Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Intelligence Committee.

This is a staff-led deposition, but members, of course, as has been the case all along, may ask questions during their allotted time. My name is Daniel Goldman, I'm the director of investigation for the HPSCI majority staff, and I want to thank you for coming in today for this deposition.

Let me briefly do some introductions. To my right is Daniel Noble, senior investigative counsel for the Intelligence Committee. Mr. Noble and I will be conducting most of the interview for the majority. Now I will let my counterparts from the minority introduce themselves.

MR. CASTOR: Good morning, Steve Castor with the Republican staff of the Oversight Committee.

MS. CASULLI: Good morning, Laura Casulli, deputy general counsel, minority, HPSCI.

MR. KOREN: Good morning, sir. Michael Koren, House Oversight Republican staff.

MR. GOLDMAN: This deposition will be conducted entirely at the unclassified level. However, the deposition is being conducted in HPSCI's secure spaces and in the presence of staff with appropriate security clearances. It is the committee's expectation that neither the questions asked of the witness nor the answers by the witness or witness' counsel, which does not have security clearance, will require discussion of any information that is currently, or at any point, could be properly classified under Executive Order 13526.

Moreover, EO 13526 states that, quote: In no case shall information be classified and continue to be maintained as classified, or fail to be declassified, unquote, for the purpose of concealing any violations of law or preventing embarrassment of any person or entity. If any of our questions can only be answered with classified information, Ambassador Sondland, we'd ask that you inform us of that before you answer the question and we can adjust accordingly.

Today's deposition is not being taken in executive session, but because of the sensitive and confidential nature of some of the topics and materials that will be discussed,

as well as the House rules, access to the transcript of the deposition will be limited to the three committees in attendance. And under those House deposition rules, no Member of Congress nor any staff member can discuss the substance of the testimony that you provide today. You and your attorney will also have an opportunity to review the transcript.

Before we begin, I'd like to go over some of the ground rules for this deposition. We will be following the House regulations for depositions, and we have previously provided those regulations to your counsel. The deposition will proceed as follows: The majority will be given 1 hour to ask questions, and then the minority will be given 1 hour to ask questions. Thereafter, we will alternate back and forth between majority and minority in 45-minute rounds until questioning is complete. We will take periodic breaks, but if you need a break at any time, please let us know.

Under the House deposition rules, counsel for other persons or other government agencies may not attend. You are allowed to have an attorney present during this deposition, and I see that you have brought some. At this time, if counsel could please make their appearances for the record.

MR. LUSKIN: Good morning. I'm Robert Luskin from the law firm of Paul Hastings, with me is my partner Kwame Manley, and we are joined by Jim McDermott from the law firm

of Ball Janik, and we're here as counsel for Ambassador Sondland.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you. Ambassador Sondland, there is a stenographer taking down everything that is said here today in order to make a written record of the deposition. For that record to be complete, please wait until I finish or we finish all the questions that are asked of you, and we will do our very best to wait until you finish your answers before moving on to the next question.

It's important that you and staff and members not speak over each other. So please do wait until the question is finished. The stenographer cannot record nonverbal answers, such as shaking your head, or an uh-huh, so it's important that you answer each question with an audible verbal answer, particularly if it's a yes or no question.

We ask that you give complete replies to questions based on your best recollection. If a question is unclear or you are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You may only refuse to answer a question to preserve a privilege recognized by the Committee. If you refuse to answer a question on the basis of privilege, staff may either proceed with the deposition or seek a ruling from the chairman on any objection, in person or otherwise, during the

deposition at a time of the majority staff's choosing. If the chair overrules any such objection, you are required to answer the question.

And, finally, you are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff. It is imperative that you not only answer our questions truthfully, but that you give full and complete answers to all questions asked of you. Omissions may also be considered as false statements. As this deposition is under oath, Ambassador Sondland, would you please stand right now and raise your right hand to be sworn.

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to give is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

MR. GORDON: Let the record reflect that the witness has been sworn. And now, Ambassador Sondland, if you have any opening remarks, this is the time.

MR. LUSKIN: And, Mr. Goldman, with your permission, a couple of housekeeping matters. Last night, I received a letter from the Department of State, which I guess I would characterize as an admonitory letter directed towards Ambassador Sondland. I'd like to share a copy with the Committee and have it placed in the record.

But we'd also want to make clear that we do not understand that letter as asserting or directing that

Ambassador Sondland assert any privilege, and therefore, he intends to answer all of your questions today without reservation and without the assertion of any privilege.

The second point is that Ambassador Sondland is pleased to be here in response to your subpoena for his testimony, but the Committee also served a subpoena duces tecum on Ambassador Sondland directing him to produce documents. As we have discussed with staff, Ambassador Sondland believes that he is precluded by law from producing official records that are in his possession, all of which have been turned over to the Department of State, and therefore, he respectfully declines to produce those documents this morning.

But we also wish to emphasize that it's his belief, and ours, that the Committee should have access to all relevant documents, and he regrets that they have not been provided in advance of his testimony. Having those documents would lead to a more fulsome and accurate inquiry into the matters at hand. Indeed, Ambassador Sondland has not had access to all of the State Department records that would help him refresh his recollection in anticipation of this testimony.

And we are also aware of other documents that we think would corroborate his testimony in material respects. So it is with regret, and not out of any disrespect for the committee or any challenge to its legitimacy, that we must

decline to produce documents in response to that subpoena. And let me share the letter, which is addressed to the three chairmen this morning, if I may.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Luskin. We also regret that we do not have the documents. And one thing that I would just say to Mr. Sondland, before your opening statement. Because we don't have the documents that may be relevant to your testimony, you may find that some of our questions seem basic. But because we are in a factfinding effort here, we don't know what we don't know, so we may ask questions that seem basic. We'd still ask that you provide full answers to them.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Understood.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're recognized for your opening statement.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today. I was truly disappointed that the State Department prevented me at the last minute from testifying earlier on October 8th, 2019. But your issuance of a subpoena has supported my appearance here today, and I'm pleased to provide the following testimony.

First, let me say that it is an honor to serve the people of the United States as their Ambassador to the European Union. The U.S. Mission to the EU is the direct

link between the United States and the 28-member EU countries, America's longest standing allies and one of the largest economic blocks in the world. A strong united and peaceful Europe helps to uphold the norms that maintain political stability, and promote economic prosperity around the world.

Second, I would like to thank my staff and the many dedicated public servants with whom I have the privilege to work every day. I have benefited immeasurably from their collective wisdom, experience, and hard work, and their patriotism serves as an example to us all.

Third, let me note that my goal today is to answer your questions directly and clearly to the best of my knowledge. I have not shared this opening statement in advance with either the White House or the State Department. These are my own words. It is important to emphasize at the outset that I have had limited time to review the relevant facts in order to prepare for my testimony. I will do my utmost to answer the committee's questions fully and truthfully, but the shortness of time is challenging.

And let me also say that I have good friends from both sides of the aisle, many of whom have reached out to me to provide support. As we go through this process, I understand that some people may have their own specific agendas. Some want me to say things to protect the President at all costs.

Some may want me to provide damning facts to support the other side. But none of that matters to me. I have no interest in pursuing higher office or taking political shots. Simply put, I am not here to push an agenda, I'm here to tell the truth.

I am a lifelong Republican. Like all of my political ambassadorial colleagues, I am an appointee of the President, and I serve at the pleasure of the President. I know that party affiliations are set aside when representing the United States. Having served on nonpartisan commissions by the appointment of three Democratic governors, and on the transition team for Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, another Democrat, I am well-accustomed to working across the aisle. For example, I worked briefly with former Vice President Biden's office in connection with the Vice President's nationwide Anti-Cancer Initiative, and I admire his long record of public service. I had bipartisan support for my ambassadorial nomination. And my successful business background and my results-oriented focus made me, in my view, well-suited to bring the fresh perspective to U.S. foreign policy that the President had sought.

As you know, I was confirmed by the Senate in a bipartisan voice vote as Ambassador to the EU on June 28th, 2018, and I assumed that role in Brussels on July 9th, 2018. From my very first days as Ambassador, Ukraine has been a

part of my broader work pursuing U.S. national interests. Ukraine's political and economic development are critical to the long lasting stability of Europe. Moreover, the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, which began nearly 5 years ago, continues as one of the most significant security crises for Europe and the United States. As the U.S. Ambassador to the EU, I have always viewed my Ukraine work as central to advancing U.S.-EU foreign policy. Indeed, for decades, under both Republican and Democrat administrations, the United States has viewed Ukraine with strategic importance, in part to counter Russian aggression in Europe and to support Ukraine energy independence.

My involvement in issues concerning Ukraine, while a small part of my portfolio, was nevertheless central to my ambassadorial responsibilities. In this sense, Ukraine is similar to other non-EU countries, such as Venezuela, Iran, and Georgia, with respect to which my mission and I coordinate closely with our EU partners to promote policies that reflect our common values and interests.

I have always endeavored to keep my State Department and National Security Council colleagues informed of my actions and to seek their input. I understand that all of my actions involving Ukraine had the blessing of Secretary Pompeo, as my work was consistent with longstanding U.S. foreign policy objectives. Indeed, very recently, Secretary Pompeo sent me

a congratulatory note that I was doing great work, and he encouraged me to, quote, "keep banging away."

While I continue my work in Europe, here in Washington there continues to be inaccurate and unsourced speculation regarding my work in Ukraine. To be helpful as you frame your questions, let me share an outline of the facts.

First, as Ambassador to the EU, my Ukraine portfolio began on day one, from the very first briefing materials I received in the summer of 2018. Although it did not consistently occupy a great deal of my time, involvement in Ukraine matters was considered by the career professionals who prepared my briefing materials to be an important part of my portfolio.

On July 13th, 2018, just 4 days after assuming my post, I received a delegation from the Government of Ukraine at the U.S. Mission in Brussels. This meeting was sought by then-Ukraine Government, and like most meetings, was proposed and arranged by career EU Mission staff. Following those initial contacts, I attended numerous meetings in Brussels and other locations in Europe during the fall of 2018, to advance U.S. interests in Ukraine. These interests reflect a whole-of-government engagement, not just a narrow focus. We discussed economic development, energy independence, and security concerns regarding Russian aggression in Ukraine. From my position in Brussels, my goal has always been to

facilitate and expedite the integration of Ukraine into the broader western norms of Europe and the United States.

To be clear, my role has been to support my colleagues in the State Department for whom Ukraine issues are a full-time job and to lend my voice when helpful. These professionals included, first and foremost, the Head of Mission, which at the start of my service was Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, and more recently, Charge d'Affaires William Taylor and their embassy staff.

I worked with Ambassador Yovanovitch personally during my first official visit to Ukraine in February of 2019, and I found her to be an excellent diplomat with a deep command of Ukrainian internal dynamics, the U.S.-Ukraine relationship and associated regional issues. She was a delight to work with during our visit to Odessa, Ukraine. I was never a part of any campaign to disparage or dislodge her, and I regretted her departure.

Similarly, in my time working with Ambassador Taylor, I have found him to be an insightful, strategic, and effective representative of U.S. interests. He cares deeply about the future of Ukraine and is a dedicated public servant. The Ukraine Mission worked hand-in-hand with Special Envoy Kurt Volker, another experienced diplomat, with a special remit to address the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Mr. Volker was an exemplary professional.

I viewed my role as adding value to the broader efforts of the Ukraine team through my engagements with high level leadership in Brussels and Washington. During my first official trip to Ukraine on February 26th, 2019, I traveled to Odessa with Special Envoy Kurt Volker, former EU Deputy Secretary General Jean Christophe-Belliard, a representative of the Romanian EU presidency, and many other officials. Joined by Ambassador Yovanovitch, U.S. Navy Commander Matthew Powell, and many others, we met with then-Ukraine President Poroshenko on the U.S. Navy ship Donald J. Cook. This visit demonstrated the U.S. military's commitment to Ukraine, and furthered our broader agenda of aligning with our EU partners to counterbalance Russian influence in the region. This visit followed on the heels of a congressional delegation to Brussels led by Speaker Pelosi. This delegation met with me and senior EU leadership.

In these meetings in Brussels and Odessa, as in nearly every meeting in which Ukraine issues were discussed, corruption and rule of law were central topics of conversation. Corruption poses challenges to the legitimacy and stability of government. Corruption is also an economic issue. Successive Ukrainian governments have sought to attract Western investors as a counterbalance to Russian interference and oligarch control of key Ukrainian companies. Western investment is fully in the strategic interest of the

United States and our EU partners. However, efforts to access private markets have been made extremely difficult by the longstanding corruption.

As one example, we frequently had conversations with Ukrainian leaders about transparency and corporate governance issues involving Naftogaz. In my experience, those issues have been the constant context in which both my team and our Ukraine counterparts have raised corruption problems for many years. We have received very positive feedback from the NSC regarding our joint efforts to address these challenges in Ukraine.

On April 24th, 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected President of Ukraine, beating incumbent President Petro Poroshenko with nearly 73 percent of the vote. This was a momentous event in Ukraine, political history, and for the overall U.S.-Ukraine relationship.

On May 20th, 2019, given the significance of this election, I attended the inauguration of President Zelensky as part of the U.S. delegation led by U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry, along with Senator Ron Johnson, Special Envoy Volker, and Mr. Alex Vindman from the NSC. During this visit, we developed positive views of the new Ukraine President and his desire to promote a stronger relationship between Kyiv and Washington, to make reforms necessary to attract Western economic investment, and to address Ukraine's

well-known and longstanding corruption issues.

On May 23rd, 2019, 3 days after the Zelensky inauguration, we were in the -- we, in the U.S. delegation, briefed President Trump and key aides at the White House. We emphasized the strategic importance of Ukraine and the strengthening relationship with President Zelensky, a reformer who received a strong mandate from the Ukrainian people to fight corruption and pursue greater economic prosperity. We asked the White House to arrange a working phone call from President Trump and a working Oval Office visit.

However, President Trump was skeptical that Ukraine was serious about reforms and anti-corruption, and he directed those of us present at the meeting to talk to Mr. Giuliani, his personal attorney about his concerns.

It was apparent to all of us that the key to changing the President's mind on Ukraine was Mr. Giuliani. It is my understanding that Energy Secretary Perry and Special Envoy Volker took the lead on reaching out to Mr. Giuliani as the President had directed.

Indeed, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and I were disappointed by our May 23rd, 2019, White House debriefings. We strongly believe that a call and a White House meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky was important, and that these should be scheduled promptly and without preconditions.

We were also disappointed by the President's direction that we involve Mr. Giuliani. Our view was that the men and women of the State Department, not the President's personal lawyer, should take responsibility for all aspects of U.S. foreign policy towards Ukraine. However, based on the President's direction we were faced with a choice. We could abandon the goal of a White House meeting for President Zelensky, which we all believed was crucial to strengthening U.S.-Ukrainian ties and furthering long-held U.S. foreign policy goals in the region, or we could do as President Trump directed and talk to Mr. Giuliani to address the President's concerns. We chose the later path -- excuse me, we chose the latter path, which seemed to all of us, Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and myself, to be the better alternative. But I did not understand until much later that Mr. Giuliani's agenda might have also included an effort to prompt the Ukrainians to investigate Vice President Biden or his son, or to involve Ukrainians directly or indirectly in the President's 2020 reelection campaign.

Following my return to Brussels, and continuing my focus on stronger U.S.-EU ties, my Mission hosted a U.S. Independence Day event on June 4th, 2019, 1 month early. Despite press reports, this event was planned months in advance, and involved approximately 700 guests from government, the diplomatic corps, the media, business, and

civil society. The night featured remarks by the Ambassador and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs. Following the main event, we hosted a smaller separate dinner party for about 30 people. President Zelensky and several other leaders of EU and non-EU member states attended the dinner, along with Secretary Perry, U.S. State Department Counselor Brechbuhl on behalf of Secretary Pompeo, and numerous other key U.S. and EU officials. Though long-planned in advance with the focus on improving Trans-Atlantic relations, we also viewed this event as an opportunity to present President Zelensky to various EU and U.S. officials and to build upon the enhanced government ties. The event was very well received, and contrary to some reporting, Bono did not attend or perform.

During a trip to Washington on July 10th, 2019, with the express, advance invitation of Ambassador Bolton, I joined White House meetings between representatives of Ukraine National Security and Defense, with U.S. NSC officials, including Ambassador Bolton, along with Secretary Perry, and Ambassador Volker. I understood following the meeting, as reflected in the summary of a phone call the next day between Secretary Perry and Ambassador Bolton, that there was a difference of opinion between Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and myself, on the one hand, and the NSC on the other. We three favored promptly scheduling a call and

meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky; the NSC did not.

But if Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, or others harbored any misgivings about the propriety of what we were doing, they never shared those misgivings with me, then or later. We had regular communications with the NSC about Ukraine, both before and after the July meeting. And neither Ambassador Bolton, Dr. Hill, or anyone else on the NSC staff ever expressed any concerns to me about our efforts, any complaints about coordination between State and the NSC, or most importantly, any concerns that we were acting improperly.

Furthermore, my boss, Secretary Pompeo, was very supportive of our Ukraine strategy. After a series of delays, on July 25, 2019, President Trump called President Zelensky to congratulate him on recently concluded Ukraine parliamentary elections, which, in Ukraine, are separate from the presidential elections. This was an important call, and I was pleased to hear that it occurred. But let me emphasize, I was not on that July 25th, 2019, call, and I did not see a transcript of that call until September 25th, 2019, when the White House publicly released it. None of the brief and general call summaries I received contained any mention of Burisma or former Vice President Biden, nor even suggested that President Trump had made any kind of request of

President Zelensky. I heard afterwards that the July 25th, 2019, call went well in solidifying a relationship between the two leaders.

On July 26th, Special Envoy Volker and I, along with others, met with President Zelensky in Kyiv, Ukraine. This was a significant bilateral meeting involving large teams from the United States and Ukraine that had been planned by Special Envoy Volker's team weeks in advance. It was planned weeks in advance, and was not, in any way, tied to the July 25th, 2019, White House call.

I was invited to this meeting in early July. Indeed, as we planned the Kyiv meeting, we did not know when or even if the White House call would occur. During this July 26th meeting in Kyiv, we were able to promote further engagement, including discussions about a future Zelensky visit to the White House. I do recall a brief discussion with President Trump before my visit to Kyiv. The call was very short, nonsubstantive, and did not encompass any of the substance of the July 25, 2019 White House call with President Zelensky.

Finally, the White House and the NSC invited me to the United Nations for the first face-to-face meetings between Presidents Trump and Zelensky in New York City, which I attended on September 25, 2019. This was a positive meeting, and I'm pleased that the leaders were able to meet for the first time face-to-face.

Given the various misstatements in the press, I want to take this time to clarify several issues, including questions involving the Ukraine public statement, the involvement of former Mayor Giuliani, and other alleged issues. First, I knew that a public embrace of anti-corruption reforms by Ukraine was one of the preconditions for securing a White House meeting with President Zelensky. My view was, and has always been, that such Western reforms are consistent with U.S. support for rule of law in Ukraine, going back decades under both Republican and Democrat administrations. Nothing about that request raised any red flags for me, Ambassador Volker, or Ambassador Taylor.

Consequently, I supported the efforts of Ambassador Volker to encourage the Ukrainian Government to adopt the public statement setting out its reform priorities. My recollection is that the statement was written primarily by the Ukrainians, with Ambassador Volker's guidance, and I offered my assistance when asked. This was the, quote, "deliverable," closed quote, referenced in some of my messages. A deliverable public statement that President Trump wanted to see or hear before a White House meeting could occur. The fact that we were working on this public statement was no secret.

More broadly, such public statements are a common and necessary part of U.S. diplomacy. Requesting that parties

align their public messaging in advance of any important leadership meeting is a routine way to leverage the power of a face-to-face exchange.

Second, there has been much press speculation about my own interactions with former Mayor Rudy Giuliani. And this is important. To the best of my recollection, I met Mr. Giuliani in person only once, at a reception at which I briefly shook his hand in 2016, almost 2 years before I became an Ambassador. This was before I became Ambassador to the EU.

In contrast, during my time as Ambassador, I do not recall ever having met with Mr. Giuliani in person. And I only spoke with him a few times. Ambassador Volker introduced me to Mr. Giuliani electronically. My best recollection is that I spoke with Mr. Giuliani for the first time in early August of 2019, which was after the congratulatory phone call from President Trump on July 25th and after the bilateral meeting with President Zelensky on July 26th. My recollection is that Mr. Giuliani and I spoke no more than 2 or 3 times by phone for about a few minutes each time.

As I stated earlier, I understood from President Trump, at the May 23rd White House debriefing, that he wanted the inaugural delegation to talk with Mr. Giuliani concerning our efforts to arrange a White House meeting for President

Zelensky. Taking directions from the President, as I must, I spoke with Mr. Giuliani for that limited purpose. In these short conversations, Mr. Giuliani emphasized that the President wanted a public statement from President Zelensky committing Ukraine to look into anti-corruption issues.

Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned the 2016 election, including the DNC server, and Burisma as two anticorruption investigatory topics of importance for the President. Let me be clear. Let me be clear: Mr. Giuliani does not work for me or for my Mission, and I do not know what official or unofficial role, if any, he has with the State Department. To my knowledge, he is one of the President's personal lawyers.

However, my understanding was that the President directed Mr. Giuliani's participation, and that Mr. Giuliani was expressing the concerns of the President, and that Mr. Giuliani had already spoken with Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker. Ten weeks after the President, on May 23rd, directed the inaugural delegation to talk with Mr. Giuliani, I had my first phone conversations with him in early August of 2019. I listened to Mr. Giuliani's concerns. My goal was to keep the focus on Ukraine and the strengthened relationship with the United States.

As an aside, please know that I would have not recommended that Mr. Giuliani, or any private citizen for

that matter, be involved in these foreign policy matters. However, given the President's explicit direction, as well as the importance we attached to arranging a White House meeting between Presidents Trump and Zelensky, we agreed to do as President Trump directed.

Third, given many inaccurate press reports, let me be clear about the following: I do not recall that Mr. Giuliani discussed former Vice President Biden or his son, Hunter Biden, with me. Like many of you, I read the transcript of the Trump-Zelensky call for the first time when it was released publicly by the White House on September 25th, 2019.

Although Mr. Giuliani did mention the name Burisma in August of 2019, I understood that Burisma was one of many examples of Ukrainian companies run by oligarchs and lacking the type of corporate governance structures found in Western companies. I did not know until more recent press reports that Hunter Biden was on the board of Burisma. Again, I recall no discussions with any State Department or White House official about former Vice President Biden or his son. Nor do I recall taking part in any effort to encourage an investigation into the Bidens.

I worked hard to keep the National Security Council, including Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill, apprised of our Ukrainian efforts. In fact, sometime in June of 2019, Secretary Perry organized a conference call with Ambassador

Bolton, Ambassador Volker, myself, and others. We went over the entire Ukraine strategy with Ambassador Bolton, who agreed with the strategy and signed off on it. Indeed, over the spring and summer of 2019, I received nothing but cordial responses from Ambassador Bolton and Dr. Hill. Nothing was ever raised to me about any concerns regarding our Ukrainian policy.

While I have not seen Dr. Hill's testimony, I am surprised and disappointed by the media reports of her critical comments. To put it clearly, neither she nor Ambassador Bolton shared any critical comments with me, even after our July 10th, 2019 White House meeting. So I have to view her testimony, if the media reports are accurate, as the product of hindsight and in the context of the widely known tensions between the National Security Council on one hand, and the State Department on the other hand, which had ultimate responsibility for executing U.S. policy overseas.

Again, I took my direction from Secretary Pompeo and have had his consistent support in dealing with our Nation's most sensitive secrets, even to this very day.

Fifth, certainly media outlets have misinterpreted my text messages where I say, stop texting or call me. Any implications that I was trying to avoid making a record of our conversation is completely false. In my view, diplomacy is handled best through back-and-forth conversation. The

complexity of international relations cannot be adequately expressed in cryptic text messages. I simply prefer to talk rather than text. I do this all the time with family, friends, and former business associates, that is how I most effectively get things done. My text messages comments were an invitation to talk more, not to conceal the substance of our communications.

Sixth, to the best of my recollection. I do not recall any discussions with the White House on withholding U.S. security assistance from Ukraine in return for assistance with the President's 2020 reelection campaign. I recall that in late July 2019, Ambassadors Volker, Taylor, and I exchanged emails in which we all agreed that President Zelensky should have no involvement in 2020 U.S. presidential election politics.

At the same time, we believed strongly that U.S. security assistance should not be withheld. Acting Charge William Taylor raised concerns about the possibility that the Ukrainians could perceive a linkage between U.S. security assistance and the President's 2020 reelection campaign. Taking the issue seriously and given the many versions of speculation that have circulated about the security aid, I called President Trump directly. I asked the President, what do you want from Ukraine? The President responded, nothing. There is no quid pro. The President repeated, no quid pro.

No quid pro quo multiple times. This was a very short call. And I recall that the President was really in a bad mood.

I tried hard to address Ambassador Taylor's concerns because he is valuable and effective diplomat, and I took very seriously the issues he raised. I did not want Ambassador Taylor to leave his post and generate even more turnover in the Ukraine Mission. I further encouraged Ambassador Taylor to contact Secretary Pompeo, as I followed up as far as I could go. As you have seen in the press, my contemporaneous messages support this recollection.

Let me state clearly, inviting a foreign government to undertake investigations for the purpose of influencing an upcoming U.S. election would be wrong. Withholding foreign aid in order to pressure a foreign government to take such steps would be wrong. I did not and would not ever participate in such undertakings. In my opinion, security aid to Ukraine was in our vital national interest and should not have been delayed for any reason.

Simply put, my goal has always been to advance U.S. interest in securing a strong relationship with Ukraine. I continue to see our relationship with President Zelensky as having great importance to national security, and I continue to work to strengthen our ties, advance our mutual interests, and secure a stable prosperous Ukraine for future generations.

I will end my remarks the way I began. Ukraine is not a dirty word. Ukraine is a fragile democracy fighting against a brutal and unscrupulous Russian neighbor. A strong Ukraine helps us to uphold the norms that maintain stability and promote prosperity around the world. It remains an honor to serve to people of the United States as their Ambassador to the European Union. I look forward to going back to work tomorrow to advance the interests of the United States of America. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your opening statement. Mr. Goldman, you're recognized to begin an hour of questioning.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Ambassador Sondland, you mentioned, throughout your opening statement, false or misleading press reports. Now, no one would say that Congress is a steel trap when it comes to information that may or may not be leaked, but it's very hard to leak testimony that has not yet been given.

So I'm curious as to where you think the numerous press reports about your upcoming testimony came from over the past week?

A I don't know.

Q You did not speak with the press at all?

A I personally did not speak to the press.

Q Did you speak to anyone else who you knew would be speaking to the press?

A I spoke with my lawyers.

Q I understand that, but how about anybody else?

A No.

Q How about from the date that you received the notice to come and testify before Congress. I want to ask you a few questions in terms of your preparation. Did you speak with President Trump at all about your testimony prior to coming here today?

A I saw President Trump at a reception for Finnish President Niinisto. I ran into him in the cross hallway at the White House. I said, I've been asked to come in and testify. And there were a lot of people around. He said, good, go tell the truth. That was the extent of our conversation.

Q How about Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney?

A No.

Q Anyone else in the White House counsel's office?

A I had a brief conversation with the White House counsel's office when the whistleblower's report came out mentioning my name, and the White House counsel's office reached me, I was in New York at the United Nation Trans-Atlantic dinner. I stepped out of the meeting to take

the call, and I believe we had a short, fairly nonsubstantive, 3-, 4-, 5-minute conversation. They wanted me to come in for an interview, and I declined until I spoke to my counsel, and I never did give that interview.

Q Do you know what date that dinner was?

A No, but I can --

Q It was in New York during the General Assembly?

A Yes.

Q Do you know if it was before the transcript of the call record had been released?

A I don't.

Q And how about before the whistleblower complaint was publicly released?

A I think the White House counsel, one of the White House counsel said it was about to be released, or it was imminent, and my name was in it.

Q Who --

A The real purpose of the call was they wanted me to come in and do an interview with them.

Q What was the purpose of the interview?

A I don't know. They asked for an interview, and I did not agree to an interview until I had spoken with counsel, my own counsel.

Q Who did you speak to at the White House counsel's office?

A I believe it was Michael Purpura (ph).

Q And did he tell you what the purpose of the interview was?

A To go over my recollections and testimony.

Q Okay. Did you discuss your testimony here today with Secretary Pompeo?

A I did not.

Q Ulrich Brechbuhl?

A No.

Q Anyone at the State Department's legal advisor's office?

A No.

Q How about Ambassador Volker?

A I spoke with Ambassador Volker shortly after he resigned and wished him well, and I asked him one question. Have I ever met Rudy Giuliani? And he said, not with me present you haven't. And I said, thank you. That was the only conversation I had with him.

Q Why did you ask him if he knew whether you had met someone?

A Because that would have been the only context in which I would have met Mr. Giuliani would have been with him.

Q It would have been with him?

A Correct.

Q You never would have tried to organize a meeting on

your own with Rudy Giuliani?

A No, we never had a meeting.

Q I understand that. But you would have never tried to organize a meeting with Rudy Giuliani without Kurt Volker?

A Let me see if I understand your question. Would I have had a meeting with Rudy Giuliani one-on-one?

Q Yes.

A It would have probably served no purpose, since Ambassador Volker and I were working together on this project, although he did have meetings with Rudy Giuliani without me.

Q And your testimony is that you never tried to organize a meeting with Rudy Giuliani directly with Mr. Giuliani?

A I think I may have texted Mr. Giuliani, and said, can we get together? And we missed, we never were able to organize anything. We never met.

Q Okay. Did you speak with Ambassador Taylor about your testimony?

A No.

Q How about Secretary Perry?

A I have spoken with Secretary Perry on several occasions relating to non-Ukraine business, and I did ask Secretary Perry to refresh my memory about a couple of meetings. Yes.

Q And can you describe what meetings you asked him to refresh your memory about?

A The meeting that was apparently described in the media by Dr. Hill where she said there was a bad meeting at the White House, or something to the effect that the meeting was abruptly terminated, and he said, I don't remember anything of the kind. I thought it was a great meeting and we all left happy.

Q So in response media reports about Dr. Hill's testimony, you reached out to Secretary Perry to have a discussion?

A I did.

Q So when was that, yesterday?

A I spoke with him yesterday, and I spoke with him about 3 or 4 days ago.

Q What else did you discuss with him yesterday?

A We have an upcoming conference. My real reason for talking to him was really about the conference on Sunday in Brussels.

Q How about related to your testimony or potential testimony, what else did you discuss with him?

A No, I only asked him if he recalled anything about that meeting being abruptly terminated or bad or any bad words, and he said nothing of the kind.

Q Are you referring to the July 10th meeting in the

White House?

A Correct.

Q And did you think it was appropriate to call Secretary Perry, who's obviously another potential witness, the day before your testimony to, quote, "refresh your recollection," unquote?

A I didn't think it was inappropriate.

Q Do you understand that that may have the appearance of trying to line up your testimony with Secretary Perry?

A I wanted to refresh my memory.

Q Did you consult your lawyer before you called Secretary Perry?

A I did.

Q And without -- okay. And you told your lawyer before you called Secretary Perry that you were going to call him to refresh your recollection?

A I did.

Q And I won't ask you about those conversations since I understand that they are protected. Did you ask about any other media reports about Dr. Hill's testimony or Ambassador Volker's testimony to Secretary Perry?

A Not that I can recall.

Q So it was just that July 10th meeting that you were concerned about?

A I believe so, yeah.

Q Did you read The Wall Street Journal article yesterday about an extensive interview with Secretary Perry?

A I did.

Q Did that help refresh your recollection as to what occurred around May 23rd?

A It was consistent with my statement that I gave. It really was quite harmonized with my statement, and not because they were harmonized, but because that's what happened.

Q So you didn't need to refresh your recollection about the May 23rd meeting, just the July 10th meeting?

A Correct. Because Dr. Hill's testimony was so -- at least as it was reported, was so contrary to any recollection I had, I thought I must have slept through something and missed something. If someone said that a meeting was abruptly terminated and that angry words were used, when, in fact, we had a great meeting, we all tweeted about it afterwards, and that was that.

Q Was it a perfect meeting?

A I wouldn't call it a perfect meeting.

Q Are you aware --

A I got the joke. It took me a minute.

Q Are you aware of any efforts by Secretary Pompeo or others at the State Department to try to stop you from testifying here today?

A I think they wanted to discourage my testimony, and I said, first of all, I wanted to testify when it was noncompulsory, and I wanted to get my story out and get it on the record. And they directed me not to appear, which is why I did not appear on the 8th. And once you issued the subpoena, again, they discouraged me from complying with the subpoena, but I decided to come in anyway.

Q Did you develop an understanding as to why they were discouraging you from complying with the subpoena?

A No clue because I didn't communicate with them, my counsel did.

Q And how did -- did you have any conversations where anyone discouraged you from testifying?

A All through counsel.

Q All through counsel?

A Correct.

Q Did you have any conversations with anyone else prior to your testimony here today in order to refresh your recollection?

A I don't recall any. I don't, other than just press reports and my own recollections.

Q No one at the White House -- no one else at the White House?

A Counsel has had conversations with the White House, I've had none.

Q Were you relayed information from the White House through counsel, not saying what that is?

A No. No. No. And I have not met with White House counsel either.

Q Did you read an article published yesterday in The Washington Examiner which included extensive excerpts from Ambassador Volker's testimony?

A I did not.

Q One moment, please. You said you had another conversation with Secretary Perry 3 or 4 days ago. Was that before or after Dr. Hill's testimony?

A I think it was before.

Q And did you discuss anything with him related to the topics of your testimony here today?

A I don't recall, because we talk a lot. We talk a lot about the lot of things. We're friends.

[10:31 a.m.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Okay. But -- so you don't recall whether you discussed your testimony here today?

A I don't recall, no, because I've had multiple conversations with him.

Q When I asked you whether you had discussed your testimony here today with Secretary Perry, you said 3 or 4 days ago. So --

A Well, the Dr. Hill testimony is what I'm testifying to, the Dr. Hill piece. I don't recall when I talked to him before.

Q Okay. What else did you discuss with Secretary Perry about that July 10th meeting?

A It was very cursory. I basically repeated -- I asked him if he had seen the report. He said he hadn't. I said, there's a report out there that Dr. Hill said the meeting blew up and was abruptly terminated and that I had threatened the Ukrainians. And he said: Not any meeting I was in did that occur. And he was there, obviously, along with Ambassador Volker.

Q So, just so we understand, there have been a lot of media reports. What specific -- can you recount with as much specificity as possible, since he had not seen the media reports, what you relayed to him about what you had read in

the press?

A I related to him in a macro sense, bad meeting, blowup, quick termination, threatened Ukrainians. And, again, I had no recollection of that. That was what, 3, 4 months ago. And I said, I recalled us all going out in the garden afterwards and all having our picture taken, along with Ambassador Bolton, and then everyone put out a friendly tweet about the meeting.

And they were so inconsistent, I said: What did I miss? And Ambassador -- Secretary Perry said: You missed nothing. That's what happened.

Q Now, you have said in the past that at some point the President, I think, gave you a special assignment related to Ukraine. What did you mean by that?

A I was spinning a little, to be candid.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could, before we get into that. Before we move on from the conversation with Secretary Perry, in your conversation with Secretary Perry, did you or Secretary Perry bring up Burisma, as that was the subject of some of the press accounts of Dr. Hill's testimony?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't believe we did. I don't recall talking about Burisma.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did you bring up any of the press coverage concerning the follow-on meeting in the Ward Room?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, I believe we did, because

there were two meetings.

THE CHAIRMAN: And what did you raise with Secretary Perry about the discussion of the follow-on meeting in the Ward Room on July 10th?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we discussed the fact that it was a very short meeting. We agreed to disagree on whether a phone call should be made or not, and we all left. And that was the end of the conversation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, I want to make sure we're talking about the same conversation. So in your call, was it yesterday with Secretary Perry?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: In preparation for your testimony today, you discussed not only the meeting, the first meeting on July 10th, but also the subsequent meeting in the Ward Room?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They were really -- they were really one meeting that adjourned to another, because some people had to go and some people continued the discussion. I think that's what happened.

THE CHAIRMAN: As best you can tell us, what did you say to Secretary Perry, what did he say in response vis-a-vis that second meeting in the Ward Room?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we both recalled that there were two meetings or one meeting that moved location, and I don't remember the rest of the conversation. I mean,

again, my goal in calling Secretary Perry was to find out if any of the things that I'd read in the media were -- if I had completely forgotten about bad meeting, bad words. And he said, no, he didn't remember.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you don't recall anything else, any of the particulars of your discussion with Secretary Perry about the Ward Room, only that you did discuss it?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That we did discuss it and that it was also a good meeting. That's all I can recall, Congressman.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Going back to the special assignment, you said you were spinning. What do you mean by that?

A The Ukrainians were very concerned that they weren't getting full support. And one of the reasons that the three of us, Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and myself, sort of took it upon ourselves, along with the blessing of Secretary Pompeo, to help support Ukraine during the ambassadorial transition and so on was in order to keep the Ukrainians happy and engaged with the U.S. They were getting very nervous.

So when I said that the President gave me the assignment, it was really the Secretary through the President, said that I could continue to work on the Ukraine matter. And Ambassador Bolton signed off on that sometime in

June of 2019.

Q When did you understand that you were supposed to take on a leadership role with Ukraine policy?

A I was not taking on a leadership role.

Q So what role --

A I was taking on a support role.

Q And who was to take on a leadership role?

A The Charge. He's the bilateral Ambassador. It's his full-time job. And then also Ambassador Volker, who's a Special Envoy to Ukraine.

Q There was a transition between Ambassador Yovanovitch and Charge Taylor, right?

A Correct.

Q Okay. So Ambassador Yovanovitch was ultimately recalled at the end of April. Do you recall that?

A Yes.

Q And left toward the middle of May. And when did Charge Taylor start?

A I think he started shortly thereafter. I don't recall the exact date. I wouldn't have been involved in that personnel issue.

Q Right. But there was no leadership in the embassy at the time of the May 20th Presidential inauguration in Ukraine, correct?

A I believe that is correct. I believe there was a

Charge there then.

Q So I guess I'm just trying to understand how you, along with Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry, took on a prominent role in Ukraine policy?

A Well, I started with my trip in February to Odessa. The trip was pretty successful. The EU really liked it. The Ukrainians liked it. This was under President Poroshenko. And I kept that file active. I wanted to stay engaged with the Ukrainians through the election.

President Zelensky won. We were invited to the inauguration. I was asked to go in the delegation. So I kept engaged with Ukraine as part of a broader team. And we had people from the NSC involved. We had Volker, Taylor, Perry. A lot of people were involved.

Q So when you said on Ukrainian television that the President gave you a special assignment, that was not true.

A It wasn't untrue. Did the President call me specifically and say, "You are assigned to Ukraine"? No. Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador Bolton did. But I assumed that authority derives from the President.

Q What did Secretary Pompeo say to you?

A Secretary Pompeo said continue to work on Ukraine.

Q When?

A I don't remember the date.

Q Before or after the inauguration?

A Continually. Keep working on Ukraine.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just follow up on that.

Did you ever have a conversation with another U.S. official, either in the National Security Council or the State Department, in which you were challenged on under what authority were you acting as in the special responsibility vis-a-vis Ukraine, in which you responded that on the President's authority?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall a conversation like that, but I think that when we had our conference call with Ambassador Bolton in early June of 2019, we sort of laid out all of the things we were talking about doing vis-a-vis Ukraine until there was a permanent political-appointed Ambassador there. And Ambassador Bolton told the group on the phone he thought that was a good idea.

THE CHAIRMAN: So I just want to make sure I understand. Is it your testimony then that, separate and apart from the public statement you made that my colleague referenced about your responsibility for Ukraine, you never told a State Department official, national security official, or other government official that the President had given you a leadership role on Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall. I may have; I may not have. Again, I don't recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if you had said that, were you

telling the truth when you said that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't understand your question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did you ever represent to someone that the President of the United States directly had put you in charge in any respect of Ukraine policy?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The President of the United States can put people in charge directly or through his duly authorized subordinates, which in this case is Secretary Pompeo or Ambassador Bolton.

THE CHAIRMAN: But my question is, did you ever represent to another government official that the President, not the Secretary but the President, had directed that you play a leadership role in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember that.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q You said that Ambassador Bolton in June signed off on it.

A Correct.

Q What occurred? What do you recall about that?

A Well, this was Secretary Perry's call. He organized it. I participated, along with several others. And Secretary Perry, this was after the May White House meeting with President Trump where President Trump had directed that we speak with Mayor Giuliani, I think Secretary Perry just wanted to take stock of where we were and made a

call to Bolton, invited us all to join, and sort of reviewed and laid out what we were planning to do in terms of doing energy work, staying close to the administration in Ukraine, and various and sundry things.

And Ambassador Bolton essentially said: That sounds good to me, that sounds great. And I remember, you know, thinking this was a good call, everyone's on the same page.

Q But that sounds like what the policy issues were with Ukraine, a policy discussion, a substantive discussion about how to deal with Ukraine.

A Well, no, we were talking about who's on first, which persons are on first. And he agreed that the three of us should continue to be engaged.

Q And prior to that, had you had any discussions, either with Ambassador Bolton, anyone else on the National Security Council, about your role in Ukraine policy, given the fact that you were the EU Ambassador and Ukraine is not a part of the EU?

A Well, as I said in my statement, Ukraine is an important part of my portfolio, as determined by those who put all of my briefing materials together from the NSC, the desk, as well as the State Department.

In February, when I went to Odessa, Dr. Hill congratulated and praised me for my effort in helping support Ukraine. So I took that to mean the NSC was supportive along

the way.

Q Did you ever have any conversations with Chief of Staff Mick -- Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney about your involvement and engagement in Ukraine?

A No, other than there was a phone call that was originally scheduled, I believe, for earlier than when the actual call was placed. And there was a lot of back-and-forth about would the call go on, would the call not go on. And Mulvaney was on that stream of emails about whether the call would be placed or not.

But I don't believe I've ever even had a formal meeting with Chief Mulvaney. I've seen him in the White House. We say hello, we walk by and wave. But I've never -- I don't believe I've sat down with him for a formal meeting on any subject.

Q Did you ever speak to him on the phone?

A I may have once or twice. I don't believe it was about Ukraine.

Q Just generally, while we're talking about phone conversations, how frequently do you speak with President Trump?

A I think I've spoken with President Trump -- and this is a guess -- maybe five or six times since I've been an Ambassador. And one of those I recall was a Christmas, merry Christmas call, and it had zero substance. And I always

called him. He never called me.

Q Did you ever discuss your -- the nature of your role in Ukraine with Ambassador Taylor?

A Ambassador Taylor knew that we were involved, because when he came on board and we were introduced, someone had briefed him to tell him that Secretary Perry, Ambassador Volker, and myself were helping to support the Ukraine effort.

In two or three conversations, he was thrilled about that. He was really happy that he had such high-level support. I'm not saying myself, because he and I are essentially peers, but I'm saying a Cabinet member and the Special Envoy. And he mentioned that on those calls.

Q We discussed a minute ago Ambassador Yovanovitch's recall at the end of April. Did you have any knowledge or awareness of the possibility, likelihood, or fact of her recall before she was called back to Washington?

A I heard a lot of rumors that people were unhappy about her or with her, but beyond that, no.

Q What rumors did you hear?

A Just that stuff I read in the press and stuff that I heard around my mission and so on.

Q Did you speak to anybody at the State Department about her status prior to her recall?

A I don't recall ever having a conversation like

that.

Q Did you speak to her at all about the situation?

A I don't think so. No, I think -- I think the only conversations we had were when I was in Odessa and maybe a couple of phone conversations after that. I didn't work with her that much, but I found her to be very delightful to work with.

Q Did you -- do you recall that at the end of March there were some articles that came out that included some accusations related to her?

A That may have been the press I was referring to.

Q Do you know what press you might have read it in?

A I have no idea.

Q And you don't remember having a conversation with her after those allegations came out?

A I don't remember.

Q Do you remember giving her any advice on how to handle the situation?

A I don't. I don't.

Q You don't?

A No.

Q You don't remember suggesting that she issue a tweet in support of the President?

A No, I don't remember that.

Q So you said in your opening statement that at that

May 23rd meeting in the White House that the President directed you to speak to Rudy Giuliani about his concerns related to Ukraine.

A He directed the delegation to speak.

Q Prior to that, were you aware of Rudy Giuliani's interest in Ukraine matters?

A Just what I had read for several years in the media. I don't know Mr. Giuliani, so whatever -- whatever I read in the media is what would have been my impressions.

Q Okay, let's focus on that. You said several years. When -- dating back to when?

A I don't know. I mean, things about Rudy Giuliani have been swirling around in the media forever. I don't know when it began or ended or --

Q Okay. Well, just --

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just interject. I'm sorry, Mr. Goldman. I just want to get further clarification.

Is it your recollection, Ambassador, that you never advised Ambassador Yovanovitch to go big, make a public statement of full-throated support of the President?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I honestly don't recall. I honestly don't.

MR. GOLDMAN: Would it surprise you if someone else said that you did do that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Probably, yeah.

MR. GOLDMAN: Would it surprise you --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know that we had -- I'm trying to remember that we ever had a career conversation, because I wasn't really involved in her career. I've had career conversations with others. I don't recall having one with her.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think it would have been appropriate for an ambassador to voice personal political support for the President rather than advocate for the issues important to Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, no, I think it's always more appropriate to advocate support for the country that you're assigned to, not for -- your political hat is off.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Did you ever have a discussion with the former Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko, about Ambassador Yovanovitch?

A I think we had a discussion in general with others there, and he wasn't high on her and he wasn't low on her. He was just sort of "eh."

Q And what did you say to him about her?

A I don't remember. I mean, it wasn't a remarkable conversation, as I recall.

Q Did you find it appropriate to have a discussion about a fellow State Department diplomat with a foreign

leader?

A Foreign leaders complain about their ambassadors all the time. That is nothing unusual. Whenever they don't get something that they want from the United States, they always blame the ambassador. I'm sure I've been blamed for many things as well.

Q Going back to Rudy Giuliani, and understanding that you had not had any conversations with him prior to May 23rd, and I believe it's your -- was your testimony today in your opening statement that you didn't reach out to him until August, what did you know about his public statements related to Ukraine in the earlier part of this year?

A I really didn't pay too much attention to his public statements about Ukraine. I was focused really on getting President Zelensky a phone call and a meeting. That's what I was focused on. That was the sum total of my effort, because I thought that would be beneficial to the United States.

Q When President Trump told you to -- you and the others, I understand, everyone at that meeting, and we'll get to that meeting in more detail -- but when he told you to discuss with Rudy Giuliani concerns about Ukraine, did you know at that point what he was referring to?

A He didn't even -- he wasn't even specific about what he wanted us to talk to Giuliani about. He just kept

saying: Talk to Rudy, talk to Rudy.

Q Right, I understand that, and I understand he wasn't specific. But when he said that, did you know what he was talking about?

A I didn't, other than he said: Ukraine is a problem.

[Majority Exhibit No. 3
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q I'm going to introduce to you now what's marked as exhibit 3, which is a New York Times article from May 9th, 2019. Why don't you take a close look at this and let me know if it looks familiar to you.

A [Reviewing.]

Q Is this article familiar to you?

A No.

Q You don't recall reading it around this time?

A No.

Q It says that -- just to quote a couple of passages, it says that: "Mr. Giuliani said he plans to travel to Kiev, the Ukrainian capital" -- and by the way, this is dated May 9th.

A Right.

Q -- "in the coming days and wants to meet with the nation's president-elect to urge him to pursue inquiries that

allies of the White House contend could yield new information about two matters of intense interest to Mr. Trump. One is the origin of the special counsel's investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election. The other is the involvement of former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s son in a gas company owned by a Ukrainian oligarch."

Then below there's a quote from Mr. Giuliani which says: "We're not meddling in an election, we're meddling in an investigation, which we have a right to do."

He then continues and says: "And this isn't foreign policy -- I'm asking them to do an investigation that they're doing already and that other people are telling them to stop. And I'm going to give them reasons why they shouldn't stop it because the information will be very, very helpful to my client, and may turn out to be helpful to my government."

Do you know who he's referring to when he says "my client"?

A No idea.

Q You have no idea?

A I mean, I assume it's the President if he's the President's lawyer, but I have no idea.

Q You knew he was the President's lawyer?

A I haven't seen this article until you --

Q That's not what I asked. You knew he was the President's lawyer?

A I knew he was the President's lawyer.

Q On the next page, it says that: "He said his efforts in Ukraine have the full support of Mr. Trump. He declined to say specifically whether he had briefed him on the planned meeting with Mr. Zelensky, but added, quote, 'He basically knows what I'm doing, sure, as his lawyer,'" unquote.

So you were aware, of course, that Mr. Giuliani was Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, right?

A Based on press reports, yes. The President has never told me: Mr. Giuliani is my lawyer.

Q Okay.

A Okay?

Q Have you ever --

A And Mr. Giuliani has never told me he was the President's lawyer directly.

Q Right. But Mr. Giuliani has a habit of speaking a lot in the media --

A Right.

Q -- and saying repeatedly that he's the President's lawyer. You've seen -- even if you haven't had a direct conversation, you're aware that --

A I'm generally aware that that's what he's been saying, correct.

Q Okay. And so you didn't read this article, you

said. Is that right?

A Correct.

Q After Mr. Trump -- and were you aware of any other public statements that Mr. Giuliani had been saying about Ukraine --

A No.

Q -- in connection to any of these investigations?

A No.

Q So just so we're clear, Ukraine took on a significant part of your portfolio. Is that right?

A No. As I said, I have 28 countries that I'm dealing with in the EU. I'm dealing with Venezuela. I'm dealing with Iran. I'm dealing with Georgia. Ukraine was a small piece of it. But I wanted to stay engaged with Ukraine because I thought it was important.

Q All right. I won't characterize it. How would you characterize your role in Ukraine policy for the State Department?

A As helpful support to those who are charged with dealing with it on a full-time basis.

Q Okay. And as someone who's trying to be helpfully supportive, would you say that it's part of your role to understand what is going on with U.S. policy and the public -- in the public media about Ukraine?

A Probably, but I can't read everything. I can't

read everything. I've got, as I said, I have 28 countries.

Q I think in your opening statement you said that Ukraine was central to your ambassadorial responsibilities, right?

A No, I think I said -- let me refer to my statement.

Q You can go to page 3. It's the fifth line from the bottom.

A "While a small part of my overall portfolio, it was nevertheless central to my ambassadorial responsibilities." Yeah.

Q And so, given that it's a central role for your ambassador responsibilities, you didn't think it was important to understand what the United States media was saying about Ukraine?

A As I said, my objective was to get President Zelensky a meeting at the White House. That was my objective.

Q That wasn't my question. My question was, did you think it was part of your central responsibilities over Ukraine to be aware of what press reports in the United States media were saying about Ukraine policy?

A I think it was more the job of the Charge or the Ambassador to Ukraine and the Special Envoy. You had two full-time people on Ukraine.

Q Okay. So what was -- so your only objective was to

get a meeting. You didn't care about what other people were saying?

A My objective was to get a meeting, because I thought that that would begin to solidify the relationship between Ukraine and the United States, which would then help me bring the EU to the table, because my number one responsibility is our relationship with the European Union.

Q All right. So let's assume that you didn't know anything about what Rudy Giuliani was saying before May 23rd, when you had the meeting at the White House. After President Trump suggested that you and Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry speak to Rudy Giuliani about his concerns in Ukraine, did you do anything to figure out what those concerns were?

A No. I let the others work on it and I went back and worked on other things, because Volker and Perry were the ones who reached out to Giuliani.

Q Okay. That wasn't my question. My question is not whether you reached out to Mr. Giuliani. My question is whether you took it upon yourself in any way to figure out what Rudy Giuliani's concerns about Ukraine were.

A I got the information through Ambassador Volker, and he said that Mr. Giuliani was concerned about corruption, which we were also concerned about. So it didn't particularly raise any interesting flags with me. It was consistent with what our concern was.

Q So you didn't do a Google search for Rudy Giuliani Ukraine?

A No.

Q You didn't look at Rudy Giuliani's Twitter feed?

A No. I never followed Rudy Giuliani.

Q What's that?

A I never followed Rudy Giuliani.

Q Whether you followed him or not, you never looked to see what he was saying on Twitter?

A No.

Q You never looked at one of his numerous television appearances where he addressed Ukraine?

A I don't recall. I honestly don't recall. I wasn't -- we had our meeting. They went off to deal with Giuliani. I went back to doing my thing.

Q Okay. I understand you went back to doing your thing and I understand that you may not have been the point person with Mr. Giuliani, but it seems pretty incredible that given that the President directed you guys, the three of you, to address Mr. Giuliani's concerns, that you did nothing to figure out what those concerns are. Is that your testimony?

MR. LUSKIN: No, it's not his testimony.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Well, I'm asking the question. Is that accurate?

A Repeat your statement again.

Q You testified that President Trump -- you testified in your opening statement that President Trump directed you and Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker at the meeting in the White House on May 23rd to consult with -- I don't remember the exact language, we can find it -- but to consult with Mr. Rudy Giuliani about his concerns related to Ukraine.

A That wasn't my testimony. My testimony was he said: Talk to Rudy.

Q Let's find it.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could follow up while counsel is looking for that reference, I just want to make sure that I understand the testimony. You've said that Secretary Pompeo gave you this responsibility for Ukraine, not the President but Secretary Pompeo, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct. And Ambassador Bolton.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you said that the President asked you to make sure that you satisfied Mr. Giuliani's concerns about Ukraine, or to reach out to Giuliani in the context of your work with Ukraine, or a call or meeting between the two Presidents.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. What the President said was the President was railing about Ukraine in the meeting at the White House, and he was going on and on and on about his dissatisfaction with Ukraine. He didn't even want to deal with it anymore. And he basically waved and said: Go talk

to Rudy, he knows all about Ukraine.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So the President directs you to talk to Rudy Giuliani. And you have this responsibility of Ukraine. The President directs you to talk to Rudy Giuliani. And it's your testimony here today that you never looked at any of his TV appearances, you never read any of the articles, you never saw any of the media that Rudy Giuliani did in which Rudy Giuliani talked about his interest and the President's interest in an investigation into the Bidens and this energy company that Joe Biden's son worked for. You never saw any of that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not then. Very much later, but not then.

THE CHAIRMAN: So it's your testimony, I think, from your opening statement and what you said just now, that up until the moment you read the call record in September you were completely oblivious to Rudy Giuliani's interest in Burisma because it involved the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I became aware of his interest in Burisma sometime in the intervening period, but I never made the connection between Burisma and the Bidens until the very end. That is my testimony. I heard the word "Burisma," but I didn't understand that Biden and Burisma were connected.

THE CHAIRMAN: You just thought that Mr. Giuliani or the President were interested in Burisma because they were

interested in a particular energy company having nothing to do with the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, Naftogaz was also mentioned, and that was another company that was mentioned.

MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, who mentioned Naftogaz?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that Naftogaz has been on the table since I started working on Ukraine. People are always talking about the problems with Naftogaz.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, but Mr. Giuliani was talking about Burisma and the Bidens. And it's your testimony today you had no idea of any Biden connection to Burisma, it came as a complete revelation when you read the call record in September?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall when I finally -- when the light finally went on that Burisma and the Bidens were connected, but certainly not early on at all. I can't tell you the day that finally I said, oh, Burisma equals Biden. I have no idea when that was.

THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you suggested in your opening statement that you didn't know until you read the call record, and it was an epiphany that the President wasn't simply interested in this energy company -- which, by the way, he doesn't mention in the call record -- but he was really interested in an investigation involving the Bidens.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I think I said that I didn't

know what was in the call until I saw the call record. I had no idea that he had brought up the Bidens in the call until I saw the call report.

THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you were also suggesting that until you read that call record -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- until you read that call record, you never put two and two together that actually Burisma involved the Bidens, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall when I finally put it together. I don't recall what the date was or the place was or the time was. I don't recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: But when you were interacting with the Ukrainians and seeking an investigation involving Burisma, did you know then that the real interest was the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was seeking a press statement so that we could get the meeting for Zelensky to the White House. That's all I was seeking. I wasn't seeking any investigation.

THE CHAIRMAN: And my question is, at the time you were seeking that, did you know of the connection between the Bidens and Burisma?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. Because I would not -- I would not endorse investigating the Bidens. I would not endorse investigating --

THE CHAIRMAN: So you completely missed all the Giuliani

media appearances and all the public debate about the President's interest and Giuliani's interest in the Bidens, you missed all of that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. It wasn't of concern to me.

MR. GOLDMAN: At some point you did make the connection, though, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

MR. GOLDMAN: And now, in retrospect, you understand that that's what Rudy Giuliani was advocating for?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can I ask you this then. Had you known at the time that the interest in an investigation involving Burisma was really an interest in investigating the Bidens, would you have pressed the Ukrainians to do that investigation?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Your answer was no?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

[Majority Exhibit No. 4
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q I just want to enter for the record exhibit 4, which is some tweets. These are some tweets from Rudy Giuliani. There's one on March 22nd where Rudy Giuliani says that should pay attention to somebody for an analysis of some

real collusion between Hillary, Kerry, and Biden people colluding with Ukrainian operatives to make money and affect 2016 election.

April 23rd, quote: "Now Ukraine is investigating Hillary campaign and DNC conspiracy with foreign operatives including Ukrainian and others to affect 2016 election."

May 2nd, quote: "Biden conflicts are too apparent to be ignored and should be investigated quickly and expeditiously."

May 10th, quote: "Explain to me why Biden shouldn't be investigated if his son got millions from a Russian loving crook Ukrainian oligarch while he was VP and point man in Ukraine." It goes on.

Are you aware of any evidence that Ukraine was involved in any way in the 2016 election?

A I have no independent basis to know that, no.

Q What did President Trump, other than directing you three to speak to Mr. Giuliani about his, Mr. Giuliani's, concerns related to Ukraine, what else did President Trump say at that May 23rd Oval Office meeting about Ukraine?

A He sort of went on and on and on about how Ukraine is a disaster and they're bad people. And we were actually quite discouraged with the meeting, because we were quite excited about the new President, the new administration, the new team, and we were excited to share our findings with him,

and he didn't want to hear about it. And he sort of cut the meeting short.

Q Did he mention anything about Ukraine's involvement in the 2016 election?

A I think he said: They tried to take me down. He kept saying that over and over.

Q In connection to the 2016 election?

A Probably, yeah.

Q That was what your understanding was?

A That was my understanding, yeah.

Q What was the upshot from that meeting other than him telling you to go speak to Giuliani?

A I think, as my statement said, it was sort of a bad meeting, inconclusive. We didn't get a clear signal from him that he would invite Zelensky to the White House, that he would call Zelensky. It was just talk to Rudy and I'm busy. And, you know, we had come all the way to brief him about it and it was sort of disappointing.

Q So I think you said in your opening statement that you understood that in order to arrange this meeting with the White House you had to somehow satisfy Mr. Giuliani's concerns. Was that your takeaway?

A That was the takeaway, yeah.

Q And so did -- you said you weren't the point person with Mr. Giuliani, but did Secretary Perry or Ambassador

Volker reach out to Mr. Giuliani after that meeting?

A I believe they did. I believe Secretary Perry was the first one, because he knew him well.

Q How long after that meeting, do you know?

A I don't know.

Q Did you get a summary of what they discussed?

A I just knew in general that they were talking, but, again, I was preoccupied with other matters. I sort of flitted in and flitted out of the Ukraine file as the need, you know, arose.

Q Did you read Secretary Perry's summary in The Wall Street Journal yesterday?

A Yeah, I did, I think. Yeah.

Q And was he -- in that article, he said that Mr. Giuliani specifically mentioned three concerns, that he blames Ukraine for something related to the -- I think he meant the Steele dossier; he said Ukraine had Hillary Clinton's email server; and made up evidence -- and Ukraine made up evidence to use against Paul Manafort.

A I saw that in the article.

Q You saw that in the article. Did that refresh your recollection as to what Secretary Perry relayed to you about his conversation with Rudy Giuliani?

A I believe that the best of my recollection is that, through Ambassador Volker or through Perry -- I don't

remember where I got the information -- was that Rudy had some bad issues with Ukraine, and until Rudy was satisfied the President wasn't going to change his mind.

Q Did he explain to you what those concerns were related to Ukraine?

A Probably the things in the article. I don't recall exactly. There were so many conversations going on by so many people at the time, it was unbelievable.

Q Okay. But, Ambassador Sondland, this is not a trivial matter. You said that you were directed -- you said you wanted a White House meeting with President Zelensky, correct?

A Correct.

Q Because you supported President Zelensky?

A Correct.

Q And when you broached that topic with the President, he said that, effectively, in order to get that, you need to assuage Rudy Giuliani's concerns.

So Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani?

A Yes.

Q Is that a yes?

A Oh, I'm sorry. Yes. Thank you.

Q So Secretary Perry spoke to Rudy Giuliani about his concerns, right?

A Yes.

Q And you then had a conversation with Secretary Perry about his conversation with Rudy Giuliani about Rudy Giuliani's concerns, correct?

A Well, when I say there were a lot of conversations, there were conversations going on between Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker, between Ambassador Volker and me, between me and Secretary Perry, and sometimes the three of us. And they were handling the initial outreach and issues with Giuliani.

Q I totally understand that. What I'm trying to understand is what information came back to you from either Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry about Mr. Giuliani's concerns?

A That he was concerned about corruption.

Q That he was concerned broadly about corruption?

A Broadly about corruption. Never heard anything but the word "corruption" initially.

Q From Secretary Perry?

A From one of them. I don't recall who.

Q Okay.

A Because, again, I haven't spoken to Giuliani until August of some time.

Q So you're then --

A So I'm getting it second- or thirdhand.

Q I understand that.

A Yeah.

Q We're just trying to figure out what and when you understood about Rudy Giuliani's concerns which the President directed you to address.

So it would seem to me -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- that if the President of the United States directs you to do something in order to get something that you want to get done for policy reasons, that you might want to figure out what those concerns are. And so I'm trying to understand to what extent you learned what those concerns are?

A The "you" is the collective you. It's the three of us.

Q I understand that. You're the one testifying here today, so we are asking what your understanding is.

A I wasn't on first in that conversation.

Q That's not the question. I'm not saying that you got it directly from Rudy Giuliani. I'm asking you whether you understood from either Secretary Perry or Ambassador Volker what the concerns that the President directed you to address of Mr. Giuliani were, what those concerns were.

A I told you, corruption. That's all I heard.

Q That's all you heard?

A That's all I heard.

Q So when Secretary Perry describes these --

MR. LUSKIN: Excuse me.

[Discussion off the record.]

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry, go ahead.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q So when Secretary Perry describes these three things to The Wall Street Journal, you're saying that he did not relay with any specificity to you, one of the three people that the President asked to look into this?

A My counsel has clarified. I didn't understand your question.

It started with corruption. Then it was Burisma and 2016 election. And then at some point in the continuum, late in the game, I connected Burisma with Biden.

Q Okay. So when did you connect -- when did you learn about Burisma and 2016?

A I believe that was somewhere in the middle. In other words, well after the May 23rd meeting, but sometime probably in July-August, where it start -- they kept putting more conditions on this meeting, and that's when I began to learn it.

Q All right. Right. I guess the question is, who is "they" that put these conditions on --

A It must have been Giuliani, because I wasn't talking to the President about it. So I was hearing this all from Volker and Perry and Perry's chief of staff, who was heavily involved in this whole --

Q And who's Perry's chief of staff?
A Brian McCormack.
Q And did you ever have conversations with Mick Mulvaney about this meeting?
A I don't believe I did.
Q All right. After that May 23rd meeting, did the President ultimately send a letter to President Zelensky?
A Yeah. That was the funny part, is that he was railing about the problems with Ukraine in our meeting, but I think shortly after that he sent essentially an unconditional invitation to President Zelensky to come visit him at the White House, subject only to scheduling.
Q Did you have any role in drafting that letter?
A None. I got a copy of it after it was sent. I was pleased to see it, though.
Q And you didn't have any discussions with anyone about pushing for that letter?
A I wanted the letter to be sent, but I didn't negotiate it. I just said, let's get a letter out.
Q Who did you say that to?
A I don't remember.
Q Someone at the White House?
A Probably Volker or Perry.
Q Do you know someone named Kash Patel?
A Who?

Q Kash Patel.

A I don't recall the name.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just for clarification. So you had no hand in drafting, editing the invitation to the Ukraine President for a visit?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to the best of my recollection, no.

THE CHAIRMAN: Made no proposed changes to that in any way?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I don't recall that. I recall seeing it after it had already gone out for the first time.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Was a draft of that letter presented to the President at the May 23rd meeting?

A I didn't present it. I don't know if anyone else did.

Q I didn't ask --

A I don't know.

Q You don't remember --

A I don't remember.

Q -- a letter being discussed?

A I don't remember, no. I do remember, once the letter came out, then it was -- everyone was fervently trying to negotiate a date, which we never were able to nail down. I don't know if it was sent by mail or how it was delivered.

Q Do you recall having a conference call around June 28th with Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary Perry, and after you spoke to them you may have patched in President Zelensky?

A I'm not saying it didn't occur. I don't remember the call, though.

Q You wouldn't remember having a conversation with President Zelensky?

A I've had several conversations with him, and I speak with a lot of foreign leaders from a lot of countries. It wasn't something that I can remember.

Q So you don't remember that you -- whether you encouraged President Zelensky to initiate any investigations in order to get the White House meeting on that conference call?

A I think the only discussion that I had in negotiating a public statement was to get a Burisma, 2016 -- this was the language that was being proposed by Giuliani.

Q This is in August, right?

A I think so. Again, I don't remember, because there were so many things flying around, but when they kept adding -- the initial draft of a press release had no conditions. It just said corruption, per se.

Q But we're not talking about August, right? And at that point, you were discussing some sort of statement that

President Zelensky would issue?

A That he would issue, and then it got shelved. It never happened.

Q Okay. And Mr. Giuliani was involved in the drafting of that statement?

A I think Mr. Giuliani was the one giving the input as to what the President wanted in the statement.

Q And what did Mr. Giuliani add that the President wanted?

A He wanted Burisma and 2016 election mentioned in the statement. And I don't believe the Ukrainians were prepared to do that.

MR. GOLDMAN: I believe our time is up, so we'll yield to the minority.

MR. CASTOR: I'm going to make an exhibit of the May 29th letter.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like a short break before? Yes, why don't we take a 5- or 10-minute break.

[Recess.]

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's go back on the record. One hour to the minority.

[Minority Exhibit No. 5
Was marked for identification.]

MR. CASTOR: I'm going to mark exhibit 5. It's the letter May 29th from the President.

Do you guys need a copy?

MR. GOLDMAN: No, we have copies.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Before I get into this letter, there was some frustration about whether you had seen that New York Times article. I mean, there's a lot of media nowadays. You know, have you seen every article, every story that references Rudy Giuliani since you began your post?

A No. I mean, I have so many cables and other things to read, I just don't have time.

Q And you're not watching TV, U.S. TV at night when you're in Brussels?

A Sometimes.

Q Okay. So have you seen Rudy Giuliani on -- you know, discuss these issues on TV?

A I watch HBO.

Q Okay.

Did you see the John Solomon Hill article at the end of March where Giuliani was -- where Lutsenko and so forth was discussed?

A I think someone forwarded it to me, but I don't remember the contents.

Q This May 29th letter, could you walk us through what happened between the May 23rd meeting with the President and then how we got to this letter, to the extent you've got

personal knowledge?

A The letter was a little confounding to me, because it was completely inconsistent with the President's attitude at the May 23rd meeting, and then all of a sudden this letter comes out.

Q So you didn't have a role in drafting or editing it?

A I don't remember having any role other than wanting the letter to happen. But, actually, I remember getting the letter as it was forwarded to me on the White -- on the State Department email.

Q Was there a draft at the May 23rd meeting that was shown to the President?

A We never had any paperwork that I remember at the May 23rd meeting. It was just an oral meeting. Yeah.

Q So you don't remember the President looking at a draft letter?

A Not in front of me.

Q Or giving feedback about a draft letter?

A No, no. He didn't seem to want to do anything with Ukraine at the May 23rd meeting.

Q Okay. The penultimate paragraph, the last sentence talks about a White House meeting.

A Right.

Q So when you saw this letter, you were --

A I was happy. We have a meeting.

Q Did you have any conversations with any of the relevant players on the staff level about how this letter came to be?

A No. All I did was I think tried to get my team at the mission -- and I don't remember who I would have tasked -- to start working on getting the meeting scheduled.

Q And stepping back to the May 23rd meeting, how did that come to get scheduled?

A I think that either Rick Perry or I reached out to someone at the NSC saying: Doesn't the President want a briefing about the inauguration? And I think -- I think it was Perry, if I recall correctly, that got it nailed down.

Q Through NSC?

A Probably. They do most of the scheduling. Yeah.

Q And you were invited to participate?

A I was -- yeah, the whole delegation was, although I don't think Mr. Vindman joined us in the meeting.

Q Why not?

A I don't know. He wasn't in the room.

Q Okay. Who was in the room, to the best of your recollection?

A Volker, Perry, myself, Ron Johnson. And then I don't recall if it was Bolton, Mulvaney. There were several people coming and going. The delegation was seated in front

of the President's desk, and people were sitting behind us on the couch and people kept coming in and out. So I don't remember who all was --

Q It might be good if you just walk us through from beginning to end what you do remember from that meeting, what time of the day it was, how long it lasted, just whatever you can remember.

A I mean, all I remember was we were all really excited about how optimistic we were about the future of Ukraine after having met with Zelensky and some of his team in Kyiv. And we wanted to share that excitement with the President, and he didn't want to hear about it. So I was pretty frustrated. I was kind of pissed, actually.

Q What time of the day was the meeting?

A I don't remember. I don't know.

Q And how long did it last?

A Pretty short. Fifteen minutes, 20 minutes maybe.

Q Who from the NSC was there?

A Bolton might have been there. I just don't remember. I know Vindman wasn't there, because I asked where's Vindman, because I had seen him in the White House. But somebody said he's not coming to the meeting. I don't know why.

Q Was Vindman cut out of Ukraine policy at any point in time or do you think he may have just had a conflict?

A I have no idea. I have no idea.

Q Your total communications with the President involving these issues have been limited, correct?

A Very.

Q So we had the May 23rd meeting. We had the September 9th telephone call. Have there been other --

A I think I talked to him just before I left for Kyiv on the 20 -- when was the Kyiv meeting, on the 25th or 6th --

Q 26th.

A -- of May? I mean of --

Q July.

A -- July.

Q Right.

A I think I called him and said: I'm headed to Kyiv to meet with President Zelensky and Ambassador Volker. Is there anything you want me to share? And he just -- he didn't want to discuss it. No, go. I don't why you're going.

You know, he was -- he'd just been down on Ukraine. It was like a nonsubstantive call.

Q Okay. So on the July 25th call, he didn't ask you to talk about Burisma --

A No.

Q -- 2016 --

A No.

Q -- the Bidens, anything?

A No. Really a short call.

Q Okay. So we have the -- that's three meetings or calls you can remember directly with the President on these issues?

A I think that's right. I think that's right.

Q At the May 23rd meeting, when the President said go talk to -- what did he say, go talk to Rudy or --

A He didn't even say go talk. He just said: Talk to Rudy. It was sort of like I don't want to talk about this.

Q So did you take that as -- I mean, it's been described variously as an order or an instruction. Was he giving an order or an instruction or was he just trying to --

A My impression was that if we never called Rudy and just left it alone that nothing would happen with Ukraine, in terms of all of the things we wanted to have happen. So I didn't take it as an order as much as an indication that if he was going to have his mind changed, that was the path. That's how I interpreted talk to Rudy.

Q Okay. And during that meeting, the President never mentioned any of these controversial topics, such as opening investigations?

A He mentioned that they tried to take me down, and he mentioned the 2016 election. That's the only thing he mentioned, yeah.

Q Okay. And he didn't mention that he had an interest, a personal interest in Ukraine opening investigations?

A At the meeting, no, I don't believe he did. I don't recall him mentioning that he wanted something done. He didn't want to talk about it at all.

Q And at that point in time did you have any knowledge that that's what Rudy Giuliani was pushing for?

A No, because -- you mean during the meeting?

Q During the meeting. Well, you know, subsequent, when the President said go talk to Rudy Giuliani, did you know at that point in time, from Ambassador Volker or some other people, that Rudy Giuliani was pushing investigations, allegedly?

A Not -- as of the time of the meeting, no, I didn't. I don't remember. I don't remember that. All I remember was being incredibly frustrated that we couldn't have a dialogue with the President about our findings.

Q Did you know if Mr. Giuliani had an agenda at that point?

A I didn't.

Q So go talk to Rudy, you didn't know what you were going to hear at that point?

A Correct.

Q When did you first get an inkling of what Mr.

Giuliani was interested in?

A You know, this whole thing was sort of a continuum, starting at the May 23rd meeting, ending up at the end of the line when the transcript of the call came out. And as I said to counsel, it started as talk to Rudy, then others talk to Rudy. Corruption was mentioned.

Then, as time went on -- and, again, I can't nail down the dates -- then let's get the Ukrainians to give a statement about corruption. And then, no, corruption isn't enough, we need to talk about the 2016 election and the Burisma investigations.

And it was always described to me as ongoing investigations that had been stopped by the previous administration and they wanted them started up again. That's how it was always described.

And then finally at some point I made the Biden-Burisma connection, and then the transcript was released. So I can't tell you on that continuum when, what dates, but that's kind of what happened.

Q Okay. Do you know if anybody on the U.S. side of things had communications with the Ukrainians about opening a meritless investigation for political purposes?

A I don't recall ever hearing that, no.

[11:46 a.m.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Okay. So to the extent U.S. officials were communicating with Ukrainian officials, like who would that have been?

A It would have been the Charge. It would have been Ambassador Volker. It would have been Mr. Giuliani, I think had some direct communication.

Q Well, he wasn't a U.S. official.

A Okay. So you're not -- okay. And then I was involved during the negotiations of the press statement.

Q Okay. So you never had communications with Ukrainian officials about opening any investigations?

A No. My communications with Ukrainian officials had to do with the press statement.

Q Okay.

A Had to do with the language of the press statement.

Q Okay. And to your knowledge, did Ambassador Volker have any communications about opening actual investigations?

A I don't -- I don't recall ever hearing about him say that.

Q So he never related that to you?

A No, not to me that, I remember.

Q So what Mr. Volker's involvement in this similar to yours in that it was zeroed in on a statement?

A Well, first of all, his involvement was -- this is with 100 percent of his portfolio. He was responsible for Ukraine along with the Ambassador to Ukraine. So he was working on Ukraine, I assume, 5 days a week, 8, 10 hours a day. So I don't know what he was doing day in and day out on Ukraine. I was again popping in and out trying to help when I could.

Q Okay. In your discussions with Mr. Volker, did you know if he had a belief that Mr. Giuliani was amplifying a negative narrative, that he believed Mr. Giuliani's views were inaccurate?

A Yeah, I don't understand that question. What do you mean by that?

Q In your communications with Mr. Volker --

A Right.

Q -- did he communicate to you --

A Yes.

Q -- that he did not believe Giuliani's views of these issues was legitimate?

A I think -- I can speculate here.

Q Okay.

A I think he was frustrated by any impediment to getting the meeting for Zelensky, particularly since the President had essentially unconditionally invited Zelensky to come to the White House in that -- in this invitation,

subject only to scheduling, so why are we talking about other -- putting more ornaments on the tree. That's my speculation.

Q Was Ambassador Volker enthusiastic about communicating with Mr. Giuliani?

A I don't think so.

Q Okay. So Mr. Giuliani's involvement here was a negative. Is that fair to say?

A Well, I think I've said in my statement that we would have all preferred to have the State Department handle this whole matter and not involve people outside of the State Department, because you don't know what they're doing.

Q But did you ever commiserate with Ambassador Volker, we've got to talk to Rudy?

A I may have.

Q And do you know if he related something similar to, we have to talk to Rudy?

A I think that was the -- I think that was the general impression of anyone who had to deal with Mayor Giuliani on this matter because it's not consistent with the way business is normally done.

Q Okay. So nobody was enthusiastic about partnering with Rudy Giuliani on this issue?

A Not that I can recall.

Q Okay. And to the extent Mr. Giuliani was pushing

some sort of investigation into Ukraine, yourself, Ambassador Volker, and other U.S. officials were not party to that?

A Sounds right.

Q You were looking towards a statement?

A We just wanted a statement to get the meeting.

Q And the statement was something along the lines to demonstrate that the Ukrainians were trying to turn the corner on corruption.

A Correct.

Q And that wasn't good enough at first and apparently it had to involve the Burisma and the further detail of Burisma in 2016.

A Correct.

Q In your discussions with the Ukrainians did you get a sense that they felt -- in your own personal knowledge -- did you get a sense that they felt that they would actually going to be opening up any investigations or were they simply just trying to get you a statement?

A I would be speculating. They didn't seem offended by the ask, but I think they wanted their meeting at the White House.

Q Okay. And the idea that Ukraine has some struggles with corruption is not a novel concept, right?

A No. As I said in my statement, that was raised by the Ukrainians to me 4 days after I became an ambassador in

mid-'18, that they have a -- they said: We have a corruption problem.

Q And President Zelensky was elected overwhelmingly and he campaigned on cleaning things up, right?

A That was one of his, as I understand it, one of his campaign platforms.

Q And U.S. officials were encouraged by that. Is that correct?

A I certainly was.

Q And Ambassador Volker was?

A Yes.

Q And Secretary Perry was?

A I believe he was.

Q And Ambassador Taylor?

A I don't think I ever discussed it with Ambassador Taylor.

Q Okay.

A But I would imagine he would have been. I'm speculating.

Q But in your communications with Ambassador Taylor, did he seem to you that he was pro-Zelensky, that he was encouraged by his election and --

A Yeah, he seemed to like Zelensky, and he sent me a photo of he and Zelensky together standing on a balcony at a meeting together and they seemed to be having a nice

conversation.

Q And is Zelensky's interest in cleaning things up genuine, to your knowledge?

A That was our impression when we met with him right after the inauguration.

Q And one of the problems in the Ukraine of course is the oligarchs have a lot of power, they have a lot of government perks that were provided to them either -- under suspicious circumstances. Is that not correct?

A That's my understanding.

Q And the owner of Burisma is a former, you know, ecology minister. And are you familiar with the allegations that he gave himself some licenses?

A I just am generally aware that Burisma's considered a potentially corrupt company. I don't know the specifics.

Q And you're aware that it has been under investigation at various points for corruption?

A That's what I understood.

Q And the president -- the president of Burisma, this Zlochevsky fellow, is -- has been under investigation?

A I don't know that person, but I'll take your word for it.

Q Okay. And so when the discussion turned to Burisma as an example of corruption, that didn't surprise you or that didn't catch you off guard?

A No. It was a new element added. It was another obstacle to getting the meeting I wanted. But it didn't surprise me.

Q Did you know of any other companies that were considered corrupt or needed to be part of the --

A As I mentioned in my earlier testimony, Naftogaz comes up at every conversation.

Q Okay. So Burisma and Naftogaz, they were two representative samples of corruption in Ukraine?

A Corruption and lack of transparency.

Q Okay.

A Yeah.

Q When the Biden element was introduced, what was your understanding of -- what exactly did people want Ukraine to investigate the Bidens for?

A I don't know.

Q Okay.

A I honestly don't know.

Q And I say the Bidens, but were they referring mostly to Hunter Biden or don't you know?

A I didn't even know who Hunter Biden was until I started reading about him in the media. I knew of Beau Biden because of his, you know, untimely passing. But I didn't -- I really -- you know, I'm not a follower of the Biden family other than I had worked with the Vice President at one point,

his office, on a project.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just for clarification, are you asking what the Ukrainians wanted the Bidens investigated for or what the President and Giuliani wanted the Bidens investigated for?

MR. CASTOR: I'm just asking the witness.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know, but what's your question? Are you asking --

MR. CASTOR: If the witness doesn't understand a question he can ask me or the witness' counsel can ask me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could we have the question read back?

[The reporter read back the record as requested.]

THE CHAIRMAN: I just want to make sure the witness understood who was referred to by the people.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not understand that. Can you clarify the question?

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q The Giuliani element?

A Can you restate the whole question, please?

Q When you first learned that there was a component involving the Bidens --

A Yes.

Q -- and that some element led by or simply Rudy Giuliani, did you have an understanding of what exactly Giuliani was pushing in relation to the Bidens?

A No, I did not.
Q And did you ever come to understand what that was?
A Only very recently.
Q And even recently, what is your understanding of exactly what Rudy Giuliani was advocating for?
A Not coming from Giuliani, but coming from media reports, now that it's all out, something about Hunter Biden being paid exorbitant board fees for service on a board.
Q Okay.
A That was my understanding.
Q And that's the sum total of the allegations, as you understand them, regarding the Bidens?
A Based on what I've read in the press, yeah.
Q Did you know whether the Vice President Biden during his tenure had involvement with Ukraine policy?
A Again, I learned recently that he apparently was asked to or had asked that a special prosecutor be dismissed. Again, that revelation came out --
Q Okay.
A -- literally in the last --
Q So during his tenure as Vice President he took a number of trips to Ukraine. Did you know that?
A I did.
Q Okay. And he took an interest in Ukraine policy. And you learned that just recently?

A I just learned that recently and I learned that Hunter Biden had traveled with him on Air Force Two.

Q Okay. Closing out the May 23rd meeting, you don't really know how it was scheduled. You said that you thought that the National Security Council staff likely put it together.

A [Nonverbal response.]

MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, you have to say yes or no.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, I'm sorry. Correct, I don't know how exactly how it was scheduled.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q How did you get invited to the meeting?

A Well, the purpose of the meeting was to have the delegation brief the President about their trip. And I was on the delegation.

Q Okay.

A Yeah.

Q So, like, who invited you? Was it somebody in the --

A I probably just got an email saying the meeting is scheduled -- they don't issue engraved invitations, they just send an email.

Q And have you told us, to the best of your memory, everything about that meeting?

A To the best of my memory. It was a disappointing

meeting.

Q And then the May 29th letter comes and you can't -- you have no idea what happened in the intervening days?

A No, because it was inconsistent with the meeting.

Q Okay. And you never learned what happened in those intervening days?

A Well, we had been pushing for a letter and the letter came out. And I don't know if it was our pushing, if it was the meeting, if the President reconsidered, I have no idea.

Q But you never had any -- you didn't call Dr. Hill or Lieutenant Colonel Vindman or --

A I don't recall any communication before the letter came out.

Q Okay. You were just happy to see it.

A I was happy to see it.

Q Your September 9th telephone call with the President --

A Yes.

Q -- there were some text exchanges that have been produced. And you reference in your statement that you decided to telephone the President. Is that correct?

A I did.

Q Okay. Could you tell us everything you can remember about that?

A I remember getting a fairly shocking text from Ambassador Taylor where he had alleged in his text that aid was being withheld from Ukraine in return for a political -- I'm trying to remember how he phrased it -- for political purposes. And --

Q Let me stop you right there.

MR. LUSKIN: Let him finish his answer.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm finished with my answer.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Okay. Because there's been a discussion about this White House meeting and whether there had to be a statement. But to your knowledge was there any discussion that aid would be withheld?

A I never heard about aid being withheld until it had actually been withheld and someone notified me: By the way, the aid has been withheld.

Q Okay. But, to the best of your knowledge, do you know about any preconditions on the aid?

A No.

Q Okay.

A I don't.

Q So it was U.S. policy to provide financial assistance to Ukraine and also lethal defensive weaponry, right?

A Correct.

Q And that was a stepped up commitment by the United States --

A Correct.

Q -- to help Ukraine?

A Correct.

Q And you're not aware of any -- any allegation -- I'm sorry, you're not aware of any fact that that aid was held up for any reason, such as investigations?

A I was aware that the aid was held up once it had been held up, that someone -- I either received an email or --

Q But you don't know --

A You don't know why.

MR. MANLEY: Let him finish his answer.

MR. LUSKIN: Let him answer, please.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know why.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Okay. So when you telephoned the President, tell us what happened.

A Well, from the time that the aid was held up until I telephoned the President there were a lot of rumors swirling around as to why the aid had been held up, including they wanted a review, they wanted Europe to do more. There were all kinds of rumors.

And I know in my few previous conversations with the

President he's not big on small talk so I would have one shot to ask him. And rather than asking him, "Are you doing X because of X or because of Y or because of Z?" I asked him one open-ended question: What do you want from Ukraine?

And as I recall, he was in a very bad mood. It was a very quick conversation. He said: I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing.

And I said: What does that mean?

And he said: I want him to do what he ran on.

And that was the end of the conversation. I wouldn't say he hung up me, but it was almost like he hung up on me.

Q Okay. And then you resumed your communication with Ambassador Taylor?

A Yeah. I had gotten as far as I could. I had asked the boss what he wanted. He wouldn't tell me, other than: I want nothing. And I sent the note back to Ambassador Taylor once I reached him and suggested that he call Secretary Pompeo.

Q So the President didn't tell you what to write in a text?

A The President didn't know I was sending a text, because he didn't know that the question came from Ambassador Taylor.

Q Okay. When you sent the text back to Ambassador Taylor, how did he -- did he respond?

A When I said, you should call Secretary Pompeo or his assistant, he said: I agree. And then I didn't follow up --

Q Did you ever close the loop with Ambassador Taylor?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. Did --

A I believe the aid was released shortly thereafter. I'm not sure it was necessary.

When was the text sent, what date?

Q September 9th.

MR. LUSKIN: September.

MR. CASTOR: September.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: September 9th.

And I think the aid was released a day or two after.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q The 11th.

A Yeah.

Q Let me be clear, you've never closed the loop with Ambassador Taylor, like, "I called the President and this is what he said"?

A We've had conversations, but I think my text spoke for itself.

Q Okay.

A And I don't know that he ever followed up with the Secretary or not. I have no idea.

Q Your text speaks for itself, but your recounting of the conversation is pretty definitive.

A That's what I remember.

Q Right. And so -- but you didn't relate the conversation with the President to Ambassador Taylor at any point?

A I don't believe I did, no.

Q Okay. I want to step back to the July 10th meeting with Ambassador Bolton.

A Uh-huh.

Q How was that scheduled?

A I think the Ukrainians through the mission in -- or through the embassy in Kyiv, set up the meeting through the Ambassador, through Taylor, would have been the normal -- you know, that they're coming to the U.S. and they want a White House meeting. I'm speculating. And it would have been set up that way.

And then once we would have been notified, somehow I would have been notified by my staff that there was a meeting going on, and I think the -- I think the idea was Secretary Perry again took the lead and said: It might be a good idea for all of us to sit in for continuity since we've been talking to them. And we were all included. We got a -- I think we got a note from Ambassador Bolton's assistant saying you're all included in the meeting and we met.

Q Do you remember who was in the meeting?

A Myself, Perry, Volker, I think Yermak. I think Prystaiko was there, the Foreign Minister, and I think Danylyuk was there, the National Security Adviser.

Q Any other U.S. folks?

A There may have been others taking notes. I don't -- I don't recall.

Q Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, was he there?

A Was he there? He wasn't in the delegation meeting. He might have been there. I don't know. I don't remember.

Q How about Dr. Hill?

A I believe she was there.

Q And what do you remember from that meeting?

A You know, it wasn't really my meeting to run. I sat and listened. And I had a -- some kind of a briefing prior to it and there were a number of subjects being covered, energy, potential White House meeting, all kinds of things. And Ambassador Bolton pretty much ran the meeting.

Q Do you remember how long the meeting lasted?

A I want to say 30 minutes, my guess.

Q And do you remember saying anything during the meeting?

A I may have chimed in on a point or two, but I remember it being a very friendly meeting.

Q Okay. Did you bring up the prospect of

investigations that Ukrainians need to conduct?

A Not to the best of my knowledge.

Q Do you remember how the meeting ended?

A I think his time was up, Ambassador Bolton's time was up. And then I think we moved to -- we moved the meeting downstairs without Ambassador Bolton.

Q Where did you move the meeting to?

A I believe it was in the Ward Room at the White House.

Q Do you know who reserved that room?

A No.

Q Not you?

A No. I have no ability to reserve the Ward Room.

Q Okay. And who was in the followup meeting?

A I think Dr. Hill, Perry, Volker, myself, Vindman. I don't recall who else.

Q So you leave the Ambassador's office --

A I think we went out and took a big picture and then went down to the Ward Room.

Q Okay. And was Dr. Hill with you the entire time?

A I don't know if she was -- she wasn't in the picture, so maybe she left and came back. I don't remember.

Q Okay. Did Dr. Hill say anything at the Ward Room component of this meeting?

A I think we were talking back and forth about, you

know, should there be a call prior to the parliamentary elections or not. And there was a difference of opinion between Brian McCormack, Secretary Perry, Volker, myself, Vindman, and Fiona. Everyone sort of had a different take on it. And it was sort of a, you know, typical discussion where not everyone is in 100 percent agreement. We were sort of going back and forth.

Q Okay. What were the two positions, to either do the call before or after the parliamentary --

A Well, I think were three positions. One was do it before, one was do it after, and the third was don't do it at all, there's no reason for one. And I don't remember whose position that was. It might have been Vindman's.

Q Don't do the call?

A Don't do the call, there's nothing to talk about.

Q Do you remember Dr. Hill's position?

A I don't. She might have been the -- she might have been on the don't do the call, but I don't remember.

Q Okay. Do you remember if Dr. Hill was in favor of the 7/10 meeting?

A The 7/10 meeting, I believe, had already been scheduled. I don't know if she was in favor of it or not.

Q Okay.

A The only action I think our group took was to make sure that we were included.

Q Did you ever have any heated discussions with Dr. Hill?

A No, not that I remember. Never had -- I don't ever remember having a heated discussion with Dr. Hill.

Q Okay. And how often did you talk to her?

A You know, maybe once or twice a month. I remember we were in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and I had texted her, and she coincidentally happened to be there. We met for coffee. I think her family was there and my wife and I, had a nice drink or coffee or something. And she sent me a nice note about Ukraine in February when we went to the Odessa thing, that that was great and it worked really well and thanks for helping. Our relationship has always been very cordial.

Q So she never expressed dismay about the scheduling of the 7/10 meeting?

A Not to me, that I recall.

Q And she never expressed to you dismay about how the meeting -- what occurred in the meeting in Ambassador Bolton's office?

A Not to -- not to my recollection.

Q And when you decamped to the Ward Room she didn't express any dismay about what was discussed?

A No. It was a typical policy discussion where people disagree on policy.

Q Was she in the Ward Room meeting the whole time or

did she leave early?

A I don't -- I don't remember.

Q Okay.

A It wasn't even -- it wasn't even like a sit-down meeting. We were all standing up. We were just looking for a place to talk.

Q Okay. And do you remember how long that lasted?

A A few minutes.

Q Okay. So much shorter than --

A 10, 10 minutes maybe, 15 minutes. It wasn't a -- it wasn't a long meeting.

Q Okay. So you never even sat down?

A I don't think so.

Q So the folks that were in the Ward Room was the same bunch that was in Ambassador Bolton's office minus Ambassador --

A I don't believe the Ukrainians were there.

Q Oh, they were not? Okay.

A I don't think so. I'm trying to remember.

Q Okay.

A I don't recall --

Q Okay.

A -- if the Ukrainians were there --

Q Okay.

A -- or if a couple of them came. You know, we

were -- we were sort of on the move. It wasn't a formally set meeting that I remember. It was sort of like let's find a place to talk --

Q Okay.

A -- once Bolton had had to leave.

Q Okay. And Dr. Hill never, even after that meeting, never expressed any discomfort or dismay?

A No. I communicated with her on another subject a week or 2 later and it was just great. I mean, again, I've never had an unpleasant conversation with her that I can remember, of any kind.

Q How frequently did you speak with Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A Really only about the Odessa -- I'm sorry, about the inaugural trip, because he was on the delegation. And then I think a few times thereafter. And then he sort of dropped away.

Q Okay. So he never expressed any dismay about any of these?

A No, not that I remember. Again, I don't remember anybody being upset, dismayed, alarmed, concerned at any point in this whole -- in this whole process about -- about the July 10th meeting.

Q Okay. The next key event is the telephone call on July 25th.

A Correct.

Q Do you remember anything about how that call was scheduled?

A No. I remember it was the NSC -- and this was what was so funny about it, the NSC had originally scheduled, after I read all of this stuff in the press about how they were alarmed and didn't want to call -- didn't want to have a call, they had actually scheduled a call for July 20th.

And there was a whole -- there was a whole string from the scheduling office at the NSC that the call was set and they were going to do a test call. And then somehow at the last minute someone on that stream said no call on the 20th, it's too close to the election.

And we were disappointed because I think Volker or someone had communicated to the Ukrainians that there would be a call on the 20th, and I think they were getting Zelensky ready for it, and he was having to drive in to a phone. I don't remember all the details, but our credibility was sinking quickly because the call got pulled down at the last minute, and then the call never really occurred, I believe, until the 25th, so 5 days later.

Q So first the call was scheduled before the election?

A Yes.

Q Then the call was scheduled after the election?

A Correct.

Q But you had no role in scheduling the call or advocating to --

A I had a role in -- I was constantly pushing folks at the White House, probably Vindman, probably Hill, probably others, let's get a call.

Q But did they respond to you, like, okay we'll do it --

A We're working on it. It was always the same, we're working on it.

Q Okay. Did you get a readout from the call?

A No. What I got was I got a summary from one of my staff I think a day or two later, and the summary was very sort of innocuous. It was, you know, had a good call, talked about closer relations. That was it. I never got a transcript until it was released.

Q Did you hear Ambassador Volker or Ambassador Taylor or anybody else talk about the call?

A No.

Q They didn't give you any --

A No one said the call was anything but, quote, "a good call." That was it.

Q Okay. So you didn't know anything else other than that?

A No. I was happy to hear they had a good call.

Q Did you hear from the Ukrainians, because you meet the very next day? Did you hear from them about the call?

A I think they were -- everyone was happy about the call.

Q Okay. And that was the extent of your information --

A Correct.

Q -- even after the end of the very next day, your meetings with the Ukrainians?

A Correct. Everyone said it was a good call.

Q Did you have any discussions with Ambassador Volker during your trip about the call? Did he give you any additional information?

A I don't know that Ambassador Volker was on the call.

Q Okay. Okay. But did he get a readout from anybody?

A I think he got the same -- I'm speculating -- he got the same summary that I did.

Q Okay. When did you first realize that there might me some controversy with regard to the call?

A When the transcript was released.

Q Okay. And you were surprised?

A Quite.

Q And could you tell us how you learned that the

transcript was coming? Did you get an advanced copy?

A I don't think I did get an advanced copy. I think I saw it when everyone saw it for the first time.

Q Prior to the transcript release, I think the news of the complaint had surfaced. Do you remember when you first heard that somebody had raised a complaint?

A I believe that was when, as I testified earlier, when someone from the White House called and said: Your name is mentioned in the complaint.

Q Okay.

A Along with Ambassador Volker.

Q Okay.

A So that would have been just before the complaint was made public.

Q Okay. When did you first read the transcript?

A Of the call?

Q Of the call. Yeah.

A Probably when it became public.

Q Okay. So you just read it on the internet like everybody else?

A I think so. I think -- or maybe someone on my staff stuck it on my desk. I don't know.

Q Okay. But you were in New York at the time, right?

A Yeah. So my control officer might have put it in my folder. I don't remember. I remember reading it pretty

much contemporaneously with everyone else.

Q Okay. And what was your reaction to the transcript?

A Well, it wasn't consistent with what, you know, I had understood the ask was.

Q Were you surprised that 2016 was mentioned or --

A Not 2016, because, as I said, during this continuum 2016 and Burisma had been mentioned. As I recall the transcript, it specifically mentioned the Bidens, and I had never heard the Bidens mentioned specifically until, you know -- and obviously it had occurred long before because that call was made on July 25th.

Q And did you realize there was going to be a lot of questions about that part of the transcript?

A Yeah, because before the transcript was even out, you know, all of the press was making a big hullabaloo about it.

Q Okay. And did you speak with anybody such as Ambassador Volker or any other people?

A I don't -- I don't remember. I mean it -- no, I don't remember if I did or didn't.

Q Okay. So you hear the news reports, and then you get a copy of it, and then the White House calls you, and that's pretty much the sum total of the --

A I think so, yeah.

Q Okay.

A They wanted me to come in and I said: I need to talk to my counsel.

Q Okay.

A And I never came in.

Q The President's deep-rooted view, skeptical view of Ukraine and their anti-corruption system, what do you, to the extent you know, what was the basis for his -- basis for his views?

A You mean aside from his, you know, comment about they tried to take me down?

Q Yes.

A Just a general?

Q Yes.

A I think generally he was frustrated that they would always promise things and never deliver. That's one of the reasons he was so adamant about seeing something put out by President Zelensky either in the form of a press release or an interview on network television or something where President Zelensky would publicly commit to whatever he was going to commit to. I think that was my understanding from Volker as dictated by Giuliani. He wanted somebody to go on the record.

Q The President was an advocate for the U.S. military aid and additional aid. Is that correct?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. Did you ever have any discussions with National Security Council staff about the 7/18 hold? On July 18th, that's when the aid was held up.

A I don't believe I talked to the NSC staff. I believe I was told by Ambassador Taylor through a text that there was a hold. He had participated in a SVTC and he had found out about a hold. And that was frustrating to me because it just put another obstacle in the way of getting a meeting.

Q What facts or what firsthand accounts can you provide about the aid holdup?

A None.

Q Okay.

A Other than I was aware of it, I didn't know why I kept getting different answers from different people.

Q Okay.

A There was never any clear -- any clear articulation by anyone of, is there even a hold, is it a review, is it an audit, is it the Europeans? I could never get a straight answer out of anyone.

Q So you never tried to contact OMB or National Security Council to find out more?

A I think I -- I think I made a couple of calls. I may have asked a couple of my folks in the mission. And I

just -- it just kept getting to be a dead end. I just could not get a straight answer.

Q So you didn't lobby anybody to lift the aid, you were just trying to find out had what was going on?

A Yeah, I was trying to find out what was going on. And I think there was an email that went around saying we can't, you know, cut off aid under any circumstances. And I think I had added to it, I agree, you know, because I thought it was -- it was not a good idea for any reason to cut that aid off.

Q So you were not an actor in that set of facts?

A If I was, it was unwitting. I don't remember having any role whatsoever in that.

MR. CASTOR: Mr. Jordan, we've got about 15 minutes left. Does it make sense to?

Mr. Nunes.

MR. NUNES: Thank you, Ambassador.

I just want to go back to something Mr. Castor referred to about the skepticism the President has with Ukraine. I don't know how closely you followed what this committee went through in the last 3 years, but also the Mueller investigation, special counsel. A lot of it was centered on a product called the Steele dossier. You've heard of that, I assume.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have.

MR. NUNES: Were you aware that the origins of the Steele dossier were from Ukraine, many of the origins in the original Steele dossier were from Ukraine, the politicians within Ukraine?

THE CHAIRMAN: I would just posit that this the ranking member's view. We cannot accept that as an actual or factual representation. So if you're asking --

MR. NUNES: I don't want to get into a tit for tat with you, but what's factual? The Steele dossier didn't origin -- parts of it didn't originate in Ukraine?

THE CHAIRMAN: You can certainly ask the witness whether he's aware of any allegations.

MR. NUNES: I'll ask the witness whatever I'd like to ask the witness.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. And the witness will not assume that the predicate of my colleague's question is an accurate recitation of the fact.

MR. MEADOWS: But, Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, you lead the witness all the time, all the time, Mr. Chairman. Come on. It is our hour, let him ask the questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: I understand that. I want to make sure the witness understands, though, that --

MR. MEADOWS: Would you mind if we clarified your questions when it's your hour?

THE CHAIRMAN: When you're chairing a committee, should that day ever come, you're more than welcome to do so.

MR. MEADOWS: To my knowledge, this is an equal 1 hour versus 1 hour.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is.

MR. MEADOWS: And to my knowledge, you may be a chairman, but this is not a committee hearing. It's a deposition.

THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you for your input, Representative Meadows.

And you may continue, you may respond, Mr. Sondland, if you wish, to the question.

MR. NUNES: So let me just restate the question for you. The Democrats disagree that the Steele dossier, I'm assuming, has anything to do with Ukraine or originations in Ukraine. However, in the Steele dossier itself it does source information from Ukraine. Were you aware of that, Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only recently, based on media reports.

MR. NUNES: Okay. So you can under -- let me ask you another thing. Are you aware of who paid for the dossier?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not.

MR. NUNES: Would it surprise you to learn that the Clinton campaign and the Democrat National Committee paid for

the dossier?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know anything about it.

MR. NUNES: And the dossier was -- was gleaned from foreign sources. It was from a former MI6 spy that was paid by -- through a contractor to get information, dirt, opposition research, what have you, from Ukrainians and Russians and others.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't -- I don't know anything about that, Congressman. I'm sorry.

MR. NUNES: So this -- the dossier, you do remember it was fed, I think you would recall this, it was fed to the FBI?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I haven't been following the Steele dossier, I mean other than just generally knowing about its existence.

MR. NUNES: Sure. But you know that it led to Special Counsel Bob Mueller and it went on for --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I assume that was one of the --

MR. NUNES: -- for a year and a half.

So the point of this is, is that when the President says take -- they tried to take me down, there were politicians that were quoted as spreading this dirt onto the Trump campaign. Could that be what the President was referring to when he said they tried to take me down?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know what he meant. He

kept repeating it, though, they tried to take me down, they tried to take me down. He was not a fan of Ukraine, per se.

MR. NUNES: And you can understand why, from his perspective, if --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understand what you're saying.

MR. NUNES: I'm sure he read the Steele dossier many, many times.

That's all I have, Mr. Castor.

MR. JORDAN: Ambassador, tell me what you thought of President Zelensky.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, one of the --

MR. JORDAN: And now as the leader of Ukraine.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: One of the reasons I was pushing so hard for the meeting after the inauguration, I thought that he and President Trump would get along very well. He's very articulate, he's funny, he's charming, and he's pretty smart, and he's got a lot of energy. And I thought the two gentlemen would have good chemistry together and that good things would happen between the U.S. and Ukraine.

MR. JORDAN: You thought they'd hit it off.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did.

MR. JORDAN: And your focus -- and you weren't the only one. We've heard testimony. It's in her opening statement, Ambassador -- former Ambassador to Ukraine, she thought the same thing. Ambassador Volker thought that. It seemed like

everyone thought you get these two guys together, they're going to hit it off. And that was your focus. Is that accurate? Is that fair?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, it is.

MR. JORDAN: And the Ukrainian people thought this guy was the real deal.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I think he won by a fairly healthy margin.

MR. JORDAN: 73 percent. I don't know if anyone in the room's won with that margin.

So your whole goal was to get these two together and that was your focus. And you thought, if you could, that was good for the country, good for our country and good for theirs.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

The gentleman from New York.

MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Ambassador, earlier referenced Ambassador Taylor, and later you were answering questions with regards to your effort to find out why there was a hold on aid. Did Ambassador Taylor ever mention to you a -- anything about a quid pro quo prior to that text that you responded to?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: To which text do you refer?

MR. ZELDIN: Do you recall receiving a text from

Ambassador Taylor suggesting that there was a linkage between U.S. aid to Ukraine and opening an investigation into the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know that that's what the text said. I recall --

MR. ZELDIN: What do you recall?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall there was some kind of a text that aid was connected to some political agenda of the President's. That's what Ambassador Taylor articulated and that's what prompted my phone call to President Trump to ask him what he wanted.

MR. ZELDIN: And in your conversation with President Trump he was -- he was clear to you that there was no quid pro quo, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I didn't -- I didn't frame the question about the aid and the link. I did not frame the question that way. I asked the question open ended: What do you want?

MR. ZELDIN: But the President was clear about in his response to you, what was he clear --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: He said: I want nothing. I don't want to give them anything and I don't want anything from them. I want Zelensky to do the right thing. That's what he -- and he kept repeating no quid pro quo over and over again.

MR. ZELDIN: And then you told Ambassador Taylor that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Then I sent him the text that said: No quid pro quo. Please call the Secretary if you have any further concerns.

MR. ZELDIN: Do you know what source of information prompted Ambassador Taylor to send you that text?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't. I was quite shocked when I got it, though.

MR. ZELDIN: You're not -- are you aware at all of any firsthand knowledge Ambassador Taylor had to inform him of what led him to send that text?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know where he got it and I don't recall him telling me how he heard it. I just got the text.

MR. ZELDIN: Is it possible that he -- are you familiar with a Politico story that came out around that time?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. ZELDIN: Then you had a conversation with Ambassador Taylor?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: After I sent my text back to him? I don't believe I did. I think I testified earlier that I sent the text, I suggested he call the Secretary. He said he agreed. I don't know if he ever called the Secretary because, as I said, the hold was lifted within a day or two after that text.

MR. ZELDIN: At no time -- at no time you received any

information that there was a linkage between a hold on aid and opening an investigation into the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You mean prior to his text?

MR. ZELDIN: At any time, I'm asking you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

MR. ZELDIN: You don't have -- at no time did you receive any information that there was a linkage between a hold on aid to Ukraine and opening an investigation into the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall hearing multiple reasons why the aid was being held from various people. I never heard that it was being held specifically to investigate the Bidens. I never heard the word "Biden" mentioned with aid.

MR. ZELDIN: And you're not aware of Ambassador Taylor ever receiving any firsthand information that would back up that allegation either?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't testify to what Ambassador Taylor received. I don't know.

MR. ZELDIN: You're just -- you're not aware.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

MR. ZELDIN: And if I understand correctly, President Trump did in fact meet with President Zelensky at the U.N. General Assembly, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: And you were present at that meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was, along with many others.

MR. ZELDIN: And has President Trump and President Zelensky hit it off in their engagements where you have been present?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that was the only engagement where they were together that I was present.

MR. ZELDIN: So the meeting -- a meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky did in fact take place in September?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. MCCAUL: Thank you.

Thank you, Ambassador, for being here today. I'm ranking member on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

I just had a couple of questions about the freeze on the foreign assistance. You stated you learned about that through Bill Taylor. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. MCCAUL: What about Ambassador Volker?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sure we discussed it as well once I -- I think I first learned it from Taylor where he had participated in some SVTC video conference and he was told that there was a hold put on. He didn't know why. And then we probably talked about it. But again, I'm speculating. I don't remember exactly.

MR. MCCAUL: And then what was your response to that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't think much of it when it was initially put on other than I was just frustrated because it was one more obstacle to my meeting that I was trying to get scheduled.

MR. MCCAUL: Right. Did you have any conversations with President Zelensky about that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember discussing that with President Zelensky.

MR. MCCAUL: Do you know if President Zelensky had any knowledge about that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't. I don't know if he did or didn't.

MR. MCCAUL: Would it surprise you that Ambassador Volker testified that he had no knowledge about that freeze on the foreign assistance?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if he got the same text from Ambassador Taylor that I did, which was the text after the SVTC. I can't remember if that was a group text or just directly to me.

MR. MCCAUL: Right. And so from all testimony we've heard, including yours today, President Zelensky had no idea about the hold on this foreign --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know when he became aware of the hold.

MR. MCCAUL: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know when he --

MR. MCCAUL: And that's probably why you said there was no quid pro quo. How could there be if he didn't -- if the other -- the person who had received that for which, translated from Latin, would be -- had no knowledge --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Right.

MR. MCCAUL: -- about the foreign assistance, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Can you restate your question? I'm sorry.

MR. MCCAUL: In other words, that's probably why you said there was no quid pro quo, because if the person that would be receiving something had no knowledge that the foreign assistance is being held up.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I would assume that by September, just before the hold was lifted, when I was getting this alarming text from Ambassador Taylor, that at that point I would assume that Zelensky would have known that there was a hold. I don't know that he knew about the hold when the hold was put on.

MR. MCCAUL: Right. But he -- to your knowledge, you had no conversation with him about this.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall any conversation about this.

MR. MCCAUL: And your speculation is he may have learned later, correct? But that's speculation.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, it's totally speculation.

MR. MCCAUL: And that would have been certainly after the July 25th phone call.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm speculating.

MR. MCCAUL: And that's all speculation.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All speculation.

MR. MCCAUL: Okay. I yield back.

Let me ask you one more thing. So you're an ambassador. Just real quickly. Don't you have a legal obligation to certify anti-corruption before foreign assistance is given to a foreign country?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: But I'm not the ambassador to Ukraine.

MR. MCCAUL: Correct. But isn't that the practice of the State Department?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I am not aware. I'm not a bilateral ambassador. I wouldn't make those certifications with respect to the European Union.

MR. MCCAUL: Well, I guess it wouldn't surprise you that that is the policy and obligation under the appropriation that was --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't have any -- I don't have any knowledge of that.

MR. MCCAUL: There is a legal requirement.

Yes, thank you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't have any knowledge.

THE CHAIRMAN: The time of the minority has expired.

Why don't we take a 30 minutes break for lunch, and we'll resume, let's say, at 1:10 p.m.

Counsel has asked for 45 minutes, so let's resume then -- what would that be? Let's resume at 1:20.

[Recess.]

[1:25 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Should we go back on the record? Okay. Back on the record. Ambassador Sondland, during our lunch break Chief of Staff Mulvaney gave a rather remarkable press conference. Did you have an opportunity to watch it?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I did not see it. I haven't been receiving any news.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we're getting a transcript of it and we may make reference to it later when we do. But I want to go back to something you said in your opening statement. You said withholding foreign aid in order to pressure a foreign government to take such steps -- well, let me begin the paragraph on page 17.

Let me state clearly, you said, "inviting a foreign government to undertake investigations for the purpose of influencing an upcoming U.S. election would be wrong. Withholding foreign aid in order to pressure foreign government to take such steps would be wrong. I did not and would not ever participate in such undertakings. In my opinion, security aid to Ukraine was in our vital national interest and should not have been delayed for any reason." You stand by that testimony?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

THE CHAIRMAN: During Mr. Mulvaney's press conference,

he acknowledged, for the first time, that the military aid was being withheld, at least in part, over a desire to get Ukraine to investigate the DNC. I take it you were not aware of that?

MR. CASTOR: Do you have a copy of the transcript, Mr. Chairman, to pass around?

THE CHAIRMAN: We don't have the transcript, but we hope to have one soon. So we'll have exact language, but it was words to that effect. I take it that --

MR. JORDAN: We'd like to see that before you proceed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I would like to see that as well. But my question, Ambassador Sondland, is if the Chief of Staff Mulvaney acknowledged that military aid was being withheld in any part to secure Ukraine's investigation of the DNC, I take it that's not something that you were aware of until now?

MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Chair, what exactly did Mick Mulvaney say?

THE CHAIRMAN: Counsel, I'm not going to entertain any other interruptions.

MR. ZELDIN: You're asking the question, Mr. Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I heard the question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Please respond to the question.

MR. ZELDIN: I don't know if the witness would like to read the transcript.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Zeldin, no further interruptions, please. The witness is instructed to answer the question.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry, Chairman, would you repeat the question one more time?

THE CHAIRMAN: If the Chief of Staff acknowledged today that the military aid was being withheld in part over desire to get Ukraine to investigate the DNC, do I understand your testimony that this would be the first you would be learning of that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that's speculative. You're saying if he said that, would it be the first time I have learned about it?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: And would you ever have countenance, the withholding of aid, to secure Ukraine's commitment to investigate the DNC?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe I testified, or my statement indicates, I would not have withheld aid for any reason.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you, in particular, wouldn't withhold aid to secure help in a U.S. election, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: For any reason.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm asking about this particular reason. Would you ever countenance withholding aid from

Ukraine to secure an investigation of the DNC that might be in the President's interest in the 2016 election -- in the 2020 election?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I would not.

MR. ZELDIN: Mr. Chair, this entire line of questioning, why don't you just wait for the transcript?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Zeldin -- Mr. Zeldin, you're not recognized.

MR. MEADOWS: But, Mr. Chairman, you clarified on the other, and let's make sure we clarify it. You said 2020 election. That's not necessarily accurate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. --

MR. MEADOWS: You've characterized it in a way that is not necessarily consistent with what I just heard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Meadows, I think the witness understood my question.

MR. MEADOWS: Well, he didn't understand the 2020 part that you added in at the last part. He made a comment that he wasn't aware of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate your representing what the witness understood or not, but the witness can speak for himself. Let me move on to another question, Ambassador.

I think you said in answer to my colleague's questions that you really wanted the President of the United States to meet with the President of Ukraine and thought it was the

interest of both countries. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: But it became clear to you in your conversation with the President that that meeting wasn't going to take place unless the President's lawyer's interests or concerns were met. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: When the President suggested that we speak to Mayor Giuliani, that was, I believe, on May 23rd, and only a few days later, he did, in fact, issue an unconditional invitation. So at that point, we thought whatever the logjam was, it had been broken.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I think you testified earlier, didn't you, Mr. Sondland, that when the President told you to talk to Mr. Giuliani, you understood that unless the President's lawyer's interests were satisfied, there was going to be no meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: But then the invitation was issued.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll get to one thing at a time. Before the invitation was extended, you understood from the President that unless Mr. Giuliani's interests or concerns were met there was going to be no meeting. Isn't that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understood that walking out of the door on the 23rd.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, one of the other things that -- and we should have a transcript, I hope soon, Mr. Mulvaney expressed during the conference just now, was that letter invitation was a courtesy, and that scheduling may or may not allow it, but they extend that courtesy of a kind of an open generic invitation to many world leaders. Do you disagree with that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware of that.

THE CHAIRMAN: You weren't aware that the Chief of Staff of the President took a different view of how committed the President was in that letter to an actual meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry. Repeat the question again, please.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question is, Mr. Mulvaney just expressed that the letter invitation was essentially a courtesy, and the same courtesy that is extended to other world leaders, it wasn't a binding commitment to a meeting.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, when I saw the letter I took it seriously. But then we never got a meeting scheduled and we kept working on trying to get a meeting scheduled and could never get it nailed down.

THE CHAIRMAN: You testified also that the President expressed a concern to you that the Ukrainians would promise but not deliver, and that the President wanted Ukrainians on the record. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did. Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And in this context, the "promise but not deliver," and on the record, that involved getting a commitment from Ukraine to conduct these investigations that the President and his lawyer wanted? Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe that what Mayor Giuliani passed on, or I believe what I heard from Ambassador Volker, likely coming from Mayor Giuliani, because the President never made that statement directly to me or to anyone, to the best of my knowledge, was that whatever the Ukrainians were going to promise in any context, he wanted it public.

THE CHAIRMAN: You also mentioned that in going through the chronology with the minority counsel, that over time, you learned more and more about what the President and his lawyer truly wanted from Ukraine. And there was an evolution from generic interest in fighting corruption to an interest in Burisma, to finally the realization that what they were interested in was investigation of the Bidens. Is that a fair summary?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And I think you suggested that you learned about the connection to the Bidens, that the interest in Burisma wasn't generic. In fact, it was because of the Bidens, at some point before the telephone call transcript was released. Is that accurate?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall exactly when I learned that. I don't know the date.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let me ask you this: Do you recall how you learned that the President and his lawyer's interest in Burisma was not a generic interest in the company or in corruption, but was, in fact, an interest in the Bidens. Do you remember how you learned that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall what made the light go on during that continuum, no.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, when the light did go on, because you've said that you didn't think that meetings or other government action should be conditioned on helping a political campaign, when the light did go on, did you take any steps to say, Hey, we have to stop this conditioning of this meeting because this is not appropriate?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe when the light went on, the phone call had already occurred, and meetings were being discussed, but, again, never scheduled. So it became irrelevant.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you can't tell us how the light came on? That is, how you came to learn that Burisma was really the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't. I don't recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q You understood that -- you said you were happy to see that May 29th letter of invitation, right?

A Yes.

Q And how many countries are in the EU?

A 28, soon to be 27.

Q And you've seen these types of invitations to the White House without specific dates related to other countries, too, right?

A No, those letters would go to the bilateral ambassadors of those countries, not to me.

Q So you don't even see them?

A No.

Q But you did see them for Ukraine?

A Yes, because someone sent it to me because they knew I was helping on the file.

Q Okay. Because it was a central part of your ambassadorship, right?

A Because I was helping on the file.

Q Those are your words, central part of your ambassadorship, not mine. That's what you said in your opening statement. Are you staying that's not the case now?

MR. LUSKIN: We've gone over this ground. We read that portion --

MR. GOLDMAN: Mr. Luskin, I didn't expect a dispute

about this, it was in his opening statement. I just want to understand if it's now not a part of his -- the central part of his ambassadorship.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I stand by my previous testimony.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Okay. You hosted an Independence Day celebration in Brussels on June 4th of this year. Is that right?

A I did.

Q And Secretary Perry came?

A Yes.

Q Ulrich Brechbuhl came?

A Correct.

Q Was Secretary Pompeo there?

A He was not.

Q But President Zelensky came as well, right?

A President Zelensky came.

Q Did you personally invite President Zelensky?

A I invited a number of leaders.

Q Including President Zelensky?

A Including President Zelensky.

Q And did you have any substantive conversations with President Zelensky at that gathering?

A I think it was all social. There were several people at the dinner. It was a very casual social evening. It wasn't designed to do business, it was designed for people

to get to know one another.

Q Did he mention the White House meeting to you?

A I don't recall him mentioning that. I don't -- I didn't even sit next to him, he sat across the table from he and it was a big table.

Q So you didn't speak to him one-on-one at all?

A I spoke to him, but I don't recall talking about the White House meeting there.

Q By that point you knew that President Zelensky desperately wanted a White House meeting, right?

A Oh, I think President Zelensky wanted a White House meeting from the day he was inaugurated.

Q Right. Because that's a very important sign for legitimacy in Ukraine. Is that right?

A Every country that I encounter wants a White House meeting.

Q Particularly, if you're sort of a new leader, it helps to cement your legitimacy to have a White House meeting, right?

A Among other things, yes.

Q And you know from your engagement in Ukraine that Ukraine is very dependent on the United States, right?

A They are.

Q And we discussed a little bit the security assistance that the United States provides, that's part of

it. Is that right?

A I think they're dependent on us for a number of things.

Q Such as what?

A Well, first of all, moral support. That's the most important. Clearly, some defense issues, some security issues, Western capital. All kind of things.

Q Now, we're going to sort of try to move through the summer months to the best of your recollection. And, you know, just to be very clear, Ambassador Sondland, you have made it very clear today that your -- at least to us as we perceive it -- that your objective was to promote Ukraine -- democracy in Ukraine, and the Zelensky presidency, which you thought was a very positive step for the country. And I think we all recognize and appreciate that. And, obviously, you've been caught up in some events that are the subject of this investigation, but I don't think anyone doubts your good faith desire to help Ukraine.

What we're trying to understand is the factual development, the evolution of what happened really from that May 23rd meeting, you know, up until today. So, you know, to the best of your ability, we appreciate anything that you can remember.

Did you have any conversations with Secretary Perry in Brussels around that Independence Day celebration related to

Ukraine?

A I don't recall any. And, counsel, the dinner was really a social dinner. The subject of the dinner was not Ukraine and was not President Zelensky. The Prime Minister of Romania was there. The President of Poland was there. Jay Leno was there. Mr. Kushner was there. There were a lot of celebrities, guests, and it was a very sort of light-hearted evening. It was not a business dinner.

Q Did President Zelensky, as a comedian, get along well with Jay Leno?

A He was honored to meet him. Apparently, Jay Leno was his hero.

Q So fully understanding that this was not the purpose of the meeting, I'm just wondering if you had any conversations with Secretary Perry what would have been, I guess, 2 weeks after the White House meeting where you were -- you and Secretary Perry and Ambassador Volker, were given more responsibility over Ukraine. Do you recall?

A I don't, because again, I probably -- I don't believe I sat next to Secretary Perry at the dinner. I may have said hello, chatted. Everyone was making small talk. The biggest thing, frankly, that came out of the meeting from a business standpoint was that the President of Poland and President Zelensky seemed to really hit it off, and they began working on some Poland-Ukraine issues together, which I

was very pleased that that happened.

Q And just to be clear, you know, we're trying to stay on message here, or on focus. We understand there's a lot of other things that go into Ukraine policy. So when we try to narrow down the focus, the point is not at all to say that this is the only thing you were talking about, and we understand you had a wide-ranging portfolio.

So without necessarily putting a date on it, do you remember whether you had a conversation -- the conversation that you referenced with Secretary Perry about his conversation with Rudy Giuliani after that May 23rd meeting. Do you remember if that was before or after that May 29th letter?

A All I can recall, Counsel, is that when the three of us agreed that we needed to somehow contact Mr. Giuliani in order to move the process forward, that Secretary Perry volunteered to make the first outreach, because he was the most familiar with Rudy. I think when he ran for -- when Rudy ran for President --

Q Sorry to interrupt you. Do you remember when that was?

A I don't. I know that I think we all agreed that he would make the outreach. And then he and Volker, as I testified before lunch, kind of took it from there.

[Majority Exhibit No. 6

was marked for identification.]

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Okay. Now, I'm going to give you what's marked as exhibit 6, which is a number of text messages, and I'll point you to the specific pages. Can we give the minority a copy? So let's go to Bates number 26, if we could. I don't think we have it here. Okay. We must be missing this one.

There's a text message, perhaps you're not on it, between Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Taylor, that refers to a call that you had with Secretary Perry and Ambassador Bolton on June 10th. Is that the call that you reference where you spoke with Ambassador Bolton and Secretary Perry about Ukraine matters?

A I believe so, but where is this?

MR. LUSKIN: Can you refer us to --

MR. GOLDMAN: You know, I apologize, we don't have it in here.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q But it doesn't necessarily matter because you already did testify that in June you had a call.

A We had a conference call. Yeah.

Q A conference call. Describe what was discussed on that conference call?

A To the best of my recollection, I believe Secretary Perry laid out for Ambassador Bolton the notion that the

three of us would assist Ambassador Taylor on Ukraine and be there to support as the, you know, relationship was moving forward, I think Giuliani was mentioned. I can't remember exactly that, you know, the President had wanted us to somehow involve Giuliani in the discussions.

Again, I'm speculating Bolton might have said, you know, whatever, he wasn't a fan of involving other people. As I testified, I wasn't either. And the end result of the call was, we all felt, and I assume this includes Ambassador Bolton as well, we all felt very comfortable with the strategy moving forward, that we would all help on Ukraine, to be defined.

Q Did you and Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry ever develop a nickname for the three of you?

A I think you're referring to the three amigos.

Q Yeah, who coined that?

A I think we were all in Kyiv together, and someone walked up to us, and said, you look like the three amigos, we were all standing together, and I think that's where it came from.

Q You kind of liked that nickname, right?

A I don't --

MR. LUSKIN: We've all heard worse.

THE CHAIRMAN: I can attest to that.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q So on -- was there any discussion of a White House meeting on that conference call that you recall with Ambassador Bolton?

A That would have been on July -- June 10th. I think the notion of a White House meeting was probably raised every time we had a conversation with anybody about Ukraine, because we were, you know, this was after this supposed boilerplate invitation was issued, as you kind of described it. And, again, I took it as a serious invitation, you described it as sort of a boilerplate invitation. We were trying to get a meeting scheduled, back to my original testimony, which I thought was important, for the two Presidents to meet.

Q And I didn't characterize it, and I think -- but you would agree that there was no date on that invitation?

A No, but that's, I would assume, typical when, you know, you don't -- you have to coordinate a date.

Q Right.

A Two busy people.

Q And you had said you were surprised to see that letter coming out of that May 23rd meeting?

A I was surprised given the conversation on May 23rd. Yes.

Q Right. Understood. Now, did you, in the middle of June, have a Ukraine coordination meeting in Secretary

Perry's office in Washington?

A We might have. I've been to Secretary Perry's office on a number of occasions for a number of matters related to Ukraine and unrelated to Ukraine because we work very closely on European energy together.

Q Uh-huh. And you don't remember anything about that meeting?

A I don't. I would have to see some stuff to refresh my memory.

Q Now, at this point had you -- so let's say we're now in mid-June. Are you aware of what Rudy Giuliani's views on Ukraine are at this point?

A I'm only aware of what I hear through Volker, primarily, because I'm not talking to Giuliani.

Q Did you, after the May 23rd meeting, did you pay a little bit more attention to any public statements that Rudy Giuliani might have made?

A No, I have not been following Mr. Giuliani in the press. I know you were excoriating me about that earlier, but I'm not.

Q If you go to page 5 of Exhibit 3, the tweets.

MR. LUSKIN: We don't have those exhibits up here.

MR. GOLDMAN: The tweets? If you don't have it, we can get it. Oh, here. All right.

MR. LUSKIN: Which page?

MR. GOLDMAN: Page 5. It's a tweet on June 21st of this year by Rudy Giuliani where -- I'll just read it for the record. He says: New Pres of Ukraine still silent on investigation of Ukrainian interference in 2016 election, and alleged Biden bribery of President -- Pres Poroshenko. Time for leadership and investigate both if you want to purge how Ukraine was abused by Hillary and Obama people.

So this is one example of Rudy Giuliani speaking out. Were you aware of these views by this time?

A No.

Q So, again, not to belabor the point, but this is now after you were directed by President Trump to assume some leadership with Volker and Perry for Ukraine policy, and to consult with Rudy Giuliani. Is that right?

A That's not right. If it were up to President Trump, we would have all walked out of there and done nothing on Ukraine. He wasn't interested in Ukraine. He said, talk to Rudy. And as I testified earlier, first, Secretary Perry I believe, reached out to Giuliani, and secondly, Volker then took it from there.

Q In your opening statement, you said, on the bottom of page 7, that "President Trump directed those of us present at the meeting to talk to Mr. Giuliani, his personal attorney, about his concerns. It was apparent to all of us that the key to changing the President's mind on Ukraine was

Mr. Giuliani." Is that -- that was your testimony earlier today. Do you stand by that?

A Hold on just a second. I stand by that statement.

Q Okay. And you did -- given what you testified earlier today, you did want to change the President's mind about Ukraine, right?

A We wanted the President to meet with President Zelensky.

Q Right. And so, well, you just said the key to changing the President's mind on Ukraine. So when you say "changing the President's mind on Ukraine," I take it what you're saying is you wanted him to be open to President Zelensky, and to agree to meet with him. Is that right?

A That's right.

Q Okay. And the key to that meeting, as you testified, is Mr. Giuliani?

A That's correct.

Q But you didn't make any extra efforts to figure out what Mr. Giuliani's concerns, as referenced by the President in the May 23rd meeting, might have been?

MR. LUSKIN: That's not his testimony.

MR. GOLDMAN: I'm asking a question.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My testimony was that Ambassador Volker and Secretary Perry took the lead with Mr. Giuliani.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Understood. But did you make any efforts to ascertain what Mr. Giuliani's concerns were after this May 23rd meeting?

A I don't recall making any efforts. I can't say for 100 percent certain, but I don't recall that I did anything other than wait for Perry and Volker to get back.

Q How frequently in the weeks after that meeting did you speak with -- let's just do it one at a time, Ambassador Volker about Mr. Giuliani?

A I don't remember.

Q Did you speak to him at all about Mr. Giuliani in the month of June?

A I think he generally kept me informed that he was trying to get to the bottom of what Mr. Giuliani wanted, and I never heard anything definitive until later.

Q When later?

A I don't remember the day. I told you it was sort of a continuum.

Q We'll try to pin a time on it as we refresh your recollection. And is that similar to the conversations you had with Secretary Perry?

A I think I was spending more of my time with Secretary Perry on unrelated -- matters unrelated to Ukraine.

Q Secretary Perry was focused on some of the energy considerations in Ukraine, right?

A He was focused on energy considerations all over Europe, yeah.

Q And that's a very significant issue in Ukraine, energy --

A It is.

Q -- right?

A Yes.

Q And so Naftogaz, for example, is the state-run energy company, correct?

A Yes.

Q So that was a focus of Secretary Perry's, right?

A One of many.

Q But you never heard Rudy Giuliani express any concerns about Naftogaz, did you?

MR. LUSKIN: Are you talking about in the period of June?

MR. GOLDMAN: I'm talking about at all.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q So if you can turn to page 36 -- if we have that one, yes, we do -- of the text messages. So if you look at 6/26/19 at 3:48 p.m., Ambassador Taylor writes -- and this is a group that, at the top, you see that you created a group, Gordon and Bill.

A Uh-huh.

Q But this is Kurt Volker's text messages. So it's you, Volker and Bill Taylor. Is that right?

A Must be, yeah.

Q Okay. So Bill Taylor writes: Gordon, you might not have seen the message from George Kent on the high side that tells us that senior levels at the White House said that that the visit is not happening any time soon. Very discouraging. Any chance you can turn this around? If not, I don't think a senior call with the Ukrainians on Friday, as your staff is suggesting, makes sense. Your thoughts.

And then two lines on down, you write back: This is Vindman, and is being fixed. Do you recall -- this is June 26th, what you meant by or what you did after receiving this in order to fix it?

A I don't recall exactly, but I do recall that Lieutenant Colonel Vindman was against a call per se. He was never specific about why. And I'm speculating, I might have called Dr. Hill, I might have called the State Department and asked for someone to look into the matter, but I don't remember exactly.

Q Okay. And if you go to 42 at the top, you just say: "Please call. Urgent. Thanks." This is a text exchange with Kurt Volker. This is around a possible conference call that you had with Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary Perry, that I asked you

about earlier. Do you recall that conference call, again, where you --

MR. LUSKIN: Around the --

MR. GOLDMAN: Around the time, yeah. Sorry.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, you mean the one with Ambassador Bolton?

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q No, this is later in the month.

A This is -- oh, I'm sorry, that's July 10th. Okay.

Q No, it's at the top. It's June 28.

A Oh, June 28th.

Q I'm trying to refresh your recollection as to whether or not you remember anything more about a conference call that you might have had with the Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Taylor, and Secretary Perry on June 28th?

A I don't. I do not recall.

Q And whether you would have patched in President Zelensky?

A I might have, but I don't -- again, I don't remember the contents of that call.

Q Are you aware of a Ukraine-related conference in Toronto at the beginning of July?

A Is that the one that Ambassador Volker attended? I think he attended something in Toronto.

Q Do you know if George Kent attended?

A I don't. I don't know.

Q Did you have any conversations -- do you know whether Ambassador Volker met with President Zelensky there?

A I believe he reported back that they had a meeting, yes.

Q What did he report back to you?

A I think he reported that it was a good meeting.

Q Did you speak to him before that?

A Well, I spoke to him before he went to Toronto at some point, I don't know when.

Q Did you know when he intended to speak to President Zelensky about?

A I think they were just going to get together and keep the relationship going.

Q Well, you said at every meeting you discussed the White House visit?

A Always.

Q Right.

A I'm sure they talked about that, too, because the Ukrainians would bring it up.

Q And did you know by this point whether or not there was any discussion with the Ukrainians, whether it's President Zelensky or his senior officials, about any conditions for a White House meeting by the early July?

A Early July. So let's see -- so I'm looking here at

the texts.

Q So they are a little out of order because --

A This is now when Giuliani and Yermak met in Madrid.

Q No, no. Don't look at the texts because it's not related -- I didn't ask you to look at the text. I'm just asking about this July 2nd or 3rd meeting in Toronto between Volker and Zelensky, and whether you, by that point, whether you recall having any conversations with Ambassador Volker, or others, but specifically Ambassador Volker, about any conditions for the White House meeting?

A Well, at some point, and again, I don't remember the timeframe. At some point this press statement was a condition of the White House meeting.

Q Right. That was in August, and we'll get to that. But I'm just trying to understand the time line, because you have said that you remember, at some point, the investigations became linked to the White House meeting. Is that correct?

A The press statement, yeah, the press statement was linked to the White House meeting. And the press statement included -- the most laden press statement was the one that mentioned the 2016 and the Burisma investigations continuum.

Q Okay.

A You know, but there were many versions of it.

Q And other than the press statement, you don't remember whether -- is it your testimony here today that prior to the press statement, and I want to be very clear about this.

A Okay.

Q That prior to the press statement you had no awareness that the White House visit was conditioned at all on whether or not Ukraine pursued any investigations?

A I don't recall that at all. Again, I viewed an unconditional invitation, so I thought we were done. We couldn't get a meeting scheduled. Then the press statement, which was an innocuous press statement that said, pursuing corruption. Then the press statement began to have ornaments hung on it. That was the continuum as I recall it.

Q All right. Let's keep going through the texts. Go back to page 36.

A Which page? I'm sorry.

Q Page 36. If you look near the bottom, starting with 7/7 at 2:15.

A 7/7. Okay.

Q Sorry, the 2:34.

A Yeah.

Q Ambassador Volker writes: "Gordon, maybe we can talk E. Mulvaney on Monday by phone, Kurt." Do you know what that was in relation to?

A I'm speculating it might have been trying to get Mulvaney to help with the meeting.

Q Which meeting?

A The Zelensky White House meeting.

Q Okay. And what did you recall speaking?

A Or a call. I mean, again, I don't remember exactly what -- I think we were, you know, we were trying to push at every possible place we could push to get this done, because we were losing credibility with the Ukrainians.

Q I understand, and it's clear --

A After the invitation came out, because they took it seriously.

Q Right. And now we're 6 weeks later --

A Yes.

Q And there's been no date set.

A No. There hadn't even been a phone call. The phone call never occurred until July 25th.

Q And explain the importance of the phone call at this point?

A With every country that I deal with, every country with which I deal, direct calls from the President of the United States to the leader of the country and Oval visits are always valued, especially with, as you described it, a new fledgling President, who just got elected, wants to establish legitimacy. So having President Trump call him,

even if it was for no purpose other than to say hello, was valued. But then they go to the press, they say, I just spoke to the President of the United States, and it gives them legitimacy. And the Oval is the sine qua non.

Q Right. And so whether it was on this date or otherwise, obviously, you reference a conversation with Mulvaney. Did you have a conversation with Mr. Mulvaney about a White House visit for President Zelensky?

A I don't recall. All I can tell you is Mulvaney was almost impossible to get a hold of. He rarely responded to emails and almost never returned phone calls.

Q So why would Ambassador Volker be asking you to talk about Mulvaney?

A Because he figured I'd have a better chance of getting him than he would.

Q You don't have a recollection of --

A We may have connected. I don't recall.

Q You don't recall?

A I don't recall.

Q And you don't recall the substance of any conversation with Mr. Mulvaney that you may have had about a White House visit?

A I don't know the date, but I'm sure at some point, I had a phone conversation, or I may have run into Mr. Mulvaney in the White House, having been there for

another reason, and asking, you know, why don't we have the meeting yet? Why don't we have the phone call? And I don't think I got a definitive answer, other than, we're working on it.

Q He didn't tell you at any point that the President needs these investigations in order to have a White House visit?

A That was never linked. That was only specifically brought into the press statement for a brief period of time through Mr. Giuliani when we were negotiating a press statement.

Q So if another witness were to testify that you relayed the substance of a conversation that you had with Mr. Mulvaney, where you indicated that you had an agreement on a White House visit as long as you got an investigation in early July, are you saying that that witness would not be telling the truth?

A That I do not recall at all.

Q And if there was a memorialization of that witness' perspective and corroborates their testimony, are you saying that that testimony would be inaccurate?

A I'm saying I don't have any recollection about an investigation. The only thing that I have testified to is that the two items were to be mentioned in the press statement at one point during the press statement

negotiations, which were conducted between Volker, Giuliani, and, as I said, I gave input.

Q Can you go to page 37, please. Let me go to July 21st at 1:45 a.m. And I'll read it, Bill Taylor writes: "Gordon, one thing Kurt and I talked about yesterday was Sasha Danylyuk's point that President Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics." And you respond. "Absolutely, but we need to get to conversation started and the relationship built irrespective of the pretext. I am worried about the alternative."

Now, let me ask you something. What do you think President Zelensky's sensitivity about being an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics, as relayed to you on July 21st, references?

A Well, I think President Zelensky, as a general prospect, did not want to get involved in U.S. election politics, which makes sense.

Q Of course. What do you think he's referencing?

A I don't know what he's referencing.

Q You have no idea, as you sit here, what he might be referencing?

A When I said irrespective of the pretext, I wanted to keep the conversation going because at this point, we had already almost lost all credibility with the Ukrainians.

Q Right. And isn't the pretext the investigations that the President wanted?

A I think the pretext was the -- it was never the investigations, I heard it was the press statement. I've always said this was about a press statement.

Q I understand what you've said, Ambassador Sondland. And I don't know whether you reviewed these text messages before or not, but your testimony today that the press statement was the first that you heard about the investigation is entirely inconsistent with the text messages that you were on. So why I'm showing you these text messages is that it may refresh your recollection that you actually did have conversations about this before the press statement. And I will ask you once again, what could President Zelensky possibly mean when he references Washington domestic reelection politics?

A I can't speculate what Bill Taylor was doing. I wanted to keep the conversation going.

MR. LUSKIN: Can we have a minute?

MR. GOLDMAN: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: So repeat your question again, please.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q Let me take a step back. You said you've been focused on the press statement, and ultimately, what

Mr. Giuliani wanted in that press statement was a specific mention of the investigations into Burisma and the 2016 elections. Is that right?

A That's what I understood through Volker because, remember, I hadn't met Giuliani at this point.

Q Right, and we'll get to that. But you understand that the press statement was something tangible, but what -- the substance that they wanted were these investigations?

A What I understood was that breaking the logjam with getting the President to finally approve a White House visit was a public utterance by Zelensky, either through the press statement or through an interview or some other public means, that he was going to pursue transparency, corruption, and so on. It was later that the Burisma and the 2016 were added, by, apparently, Mr. Giuliani.

Q To the press statement itself?

A To the press statement itself.

Q Okay. So we can agree, you will agree, I think, that Mr. Giuliani -- the condition -- by the time of the press statement discussion, the condition for a White House meeting was a press statement that included the initiation of these investigations?

A That was, I believe, the most -- if I may use the world "egregious," version of the press statement, which was then never delivered.

Q I understand it wasn't delivered. But that addition was provided by Mr. Giuliani?

A It must have been because that's the only source it could have come from.

MR. LUSKIN: Just for clarification, I think what he's trying to say is the press statement was iterative, and that he doesn't recall at what point during that interview process the specific references to investigations, including Burisma and 2016, were added to the --

MR. GOLDMAN: We'll get to that. Well get to that.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q But my last question, because our time is up, is did you or did you not know before the discussion about this press statement whether Mr. Giuliani, as the representative of the President, per the President's instructions, conditioned a White House meeting on investigations related to domestic reelection politics?

A That was Mr. Taylor's characterization. My only recollection is that the White House visit was conditioned on the press statement involving the 2016 and Burisma. That was the only condition.

MR. GOLDMAN: I think our time is up. We'll yield to the minority.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And there's a difference between a press statement

and actual investigations, correct?

A Thank you. That's what I'm -- the point I'm trying to make, not very eloquently.

Q So if anybody was trying to get the Ukrainians to make this statement, that's different from getting the Ukrainians to make this statement and initiate an investigation. Is that correct?

A That would be my assumption, yes. They are two different things.

Q Were any other vehicles for this anti-corruption, you know, the priority they had on anti-corruption discussed, other than a statement? Excuse me.

A Explain your question.

Q Like was there another way to do this? Could they have maybe given an interview?

A Yes, exactly. One of the other alternatives, I believe suggested by Mr. Giuliani through either Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry, was just go on TV and say what you're going to do.

Q Okay. And from Giuliani or Volker, did you hear at any point in time that they really wanted an investigations or they just wanted the statement so they could move forward with the White House meeting?

A I really don't know.

Q Okay.

A I was told shortly after the inauguration by someone in Zelensky's team is that he was going to open up all of the things that were shut down under Poroshenko, and as the person put it, let the light shine in or something to that effect.

Q He had issues with Lutsenko, who is the prosecutor general, correct?

A Who had issues with Lutsenko?

Q The new President, Zelensky.

A I believe he considered him part of Poroshenko's team. Right. Yes.

Q And so opening up many of the matters that Lutsenko had been looking into, that was far broader than just these two narrow issues, correct?

A I'm speculating, but I think that's true.

Q In July 26th, when you were meeting with President Zelensky, did the topic of aid come up and the delay or the hold on the aid?

A I don't believe it did. I don't recall that. That would have been a pretty touchy subject, and I don't remember that being brought up.

Q And to the best of your knowledge, when did Ukrainians realize that the aid was being held up?

A I don't know. But as I understood it from Ambassador Volker, or Ambassador Taylor, it was quite a while

between when the aid was instructed to be held up, and when the Ukrainians actually discovered it had been held up.

Q Okay. And at some point, it became a news story, do you remember that?

A At some point.

Q Okay. So I'm going to make as exhibit -- are we up to 6? Seven. Lucky number 7. Do you guys have it? Do you want it?

A Okay.

[Minority Exhibit No. 7 was marked for identification.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q I should probably put a sticker on it.

A This was on August 29th?

Q This is on August 28th, a Politico story with the headline: Trump holds up Ukraine military aid meant to confront Russia. Do you know if the holdup in the aid was reported prior to this?

A I don't know when I learned about it. I didn't see this article until just now.

Q Do you know if -- did Volker communicate to you at some point that the Ukrainians learned about --

A I think the first time I heard that the aid was being held up was when Taylor, I believe, sent a text saying he had heard that aid was going to be held up. And I don't

recall the date of that text.

Q I think it's in a text pack, a text package, which is exhibit 6. I think it's the last page, if I'm correct.

A Okay.

Q So on September 8th at 12:37 p.m. Taylor -- do you need more time to read it or are you with me?

A I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Q Are you with me on --

A What is it that you want me to read?

Q I'm referring you to these texts.

A What page are they on?

Q Fifty-three. The last page of the pack, I think I said.

A Okay. These are September.

Q Right.

A Okay. Got it. Okay.

Q Okay. So at 12:37 p.m. Bill Taylor texted: The nightmare is they give the interview and don't get the security assistance. The Russians love it. And then, you know, you request that they initiate, you know, a call. And then Bill Taylor says at 12:31, the message to the Ukrainians, and of course, the Russians, we send with the decision on security assistance is key, with the hold we already shaken their faith in us.

MR. LUSKIN: Where is the already shaken the faith --

MR. CASTOR: 12:31.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Got it. Got it. Okay.

MR. GOLDMAN: Sorry, what page are you on?

MR. CASTOR: The last page of the pack, 53.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Okay. Got it.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Okay. And then Bill Taylor says, counting on you to be right about this.

A Got it. Right.

Q Is this the time when Ambassador Taylor becomes zeroed in on the question?

A I mean, I believe what this --

MR. LUSKIN: Wait, can you clarify what question you're talking about here.

MR. CASTOR: The hold in the aid.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The hold in the aid. Yeah, I mean, I think we knew that the aid was held up earlier than that, sometime in July.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q You knew the aid was held up?

A Right.

Q The Ambassador knew the aid was held up, but at some point the Ukrainians became aware that the aid was held up?

A Right.

Q And then Ambassador Taylor became aware, and I think he communicated that, as I understand. At some point the Ambassador communicated --

A I think the Ambassador communicated that the aid was held up in July, but he didn't know why.

Q Correct. But at some point, the Ambassador learned the Ukrainians learned.

A I see. Okay.

MR. GOLDMAN: Is that a question? Sorry.

MR. CASTOR: What's that?

MR. GOLDMAN: Is that a question?

MR. CASTOR: This is the backdrop of what we're discussing here.

MR. GOLDMAN: Well, do you know that? You just made a statement and he said okay.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Well, we started this out by saying, when you met on July 26th with President Zelensky, the aid had been on hold for a couple week by that point in time. You testified, correct me if I'm wrong, that it didn't appear that the Ukrainians knew the aid was being held at that point, correct?

A I wasn't aware that they knew.

Q Okay. And then I asked you, when did they become aware to the best of your knowledge, and I think you said

that Ambassador Taylor notified you?

A Ambassador Taylor notified me. I don't know if the Ukrainians were aware of it at that point.

Q Oh, okay. My question is, when did you learn that the Ukrainians learned? Is that fair? I mean, is that --

A No, that's --

Q Sorry.

A I understand the question. The question is when did I learn that the Ukrainians learned?

Q Yes.

A I don't recall exactly when I learned that the Ukrainians learned.

Q I think we can all agree by the time there was a Politico report --

A Everyone --

Q -- everyone would have known?

A Yeah.

Q Getting back to Taylor's concerns on the 9th, which you know, he references in the interview. Do you know what interview he was referencing?

A I think this was the press statement had now morphed into some kind of an interview that President Zelensky would give to a TV station.

Q Okay.

A And that that would replace the press statement.

Q Okay. And do you know where that interview would have occurred?

A I don't.

Q Or on what network?

A I don't know, but something President Trump would obviously see.

Q Okay.

A FOX. On Tucker.

MR. BITAR: I want to make sure the reporters got all that.

MR. MCDERMOTT: Let the record reflect there's lots of laughing in the room.

MR. CASTOR: But not by Mr. Castor.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q The 12:34 a.m. text.

A Yes.

Q Where Taylor says: Counting on you to be right about this interview, Gordon?

A Yes.

Q Do you remember, had you been -- had you been advocating to the Ambassador like, look, we'll go from the statement to the interview and we'll be all good?

A I think what that refers to, and I'm trying to recall as best I can, that someone had to move first before the other moved. So the question was, would the White House

invitation be forthcoming before the interview or after the interview? And I think what I was saying there was, give the interview, and I'm sure the White House will then respond with an invitation. And I think what Ambassador Taylor was saying was, are you sure? And I'm saying, no, I'm not sure. I just assume.

Q Okay.

A I don't know if I'm right.

[2:25 p.m.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And then Taylor at 12:47 --

A 12:47.

Q -- says: "I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign."

So just a couple texts ago it was a discussion of the interview.

A That was the alarming text.

Q Okay. And so is that why you -- did you feel that maybe there was a disconnect?

A No. That is -- that is the first time that I speculated that now this aid was actually being held up in order to do this political thing, and that's when I called President Trump and got the answer I got.

Q And you got the definitive answer from him that he didn't want anything?

A I got what he told me, yes.

Q He wanted nothing, I think is --

A I want nothing.

Q Okay. And then it seems to me, and maybe I missed this, but it seems to me then there isn't a clear next communication with you and the Ambassador. You send this relatively long text and it sort of sounds like it's well-thought-out. Did that end it?

A Well -- no. What ended it was I said: I suggest you call the Secretary --

Q Right.

A -- because this is your portfolio. Call the Secretary. And he said: I agree. And I never heard anything further.

Q Do you know if he called the Secretary?

A I don't.

Q And then it became moot, because the aid was lifted?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Subsequent to that difficult period, did you ever have any communications with the Ambassador about what happened there?

A I -- my best recollection is that once the aid hold was lifted we were out of the woods and we were back to what's it going to take to get the White House meeting.

Q Okay. Between the 9th and all this news breaking, which happened around the 22nd or 23rd of September, did you have any further discussions with the Ambassador about a statement or a news interview?

A I think -- I believe -- and, again, best of my recollection, was that was when the meeting morphed into the United Nations meeting.

Q Okay.

A So I was disappointed, because I thought the White House meeting would have been far more impactful and important for President Zelensky, but the decision was made above my pay grade to do this at the United Nations sometime in late September.

Q Okay. And that took the place of the White House meeting?

A Well, there still has -- as you recall, the two Presidents joked at that meeting: You invited me to the White House, I still don't have a date. This was President Zelensky saying to President Trump.

Q Right.

A Which was in the media. The press was in the room at the time. President Trump said, I'm working on it, and smiled, was the end of that. There still hasn't been an Oval meeting, to the best of my knowledge.

Q Right. I think we would know.

Have you had, since this story broke, have you had any communications with Ambassador Taylor about this topic?

A I don't recall talking to Ambassador Taylor after the -- I got the phone call from the White House about the whistleblower complaint. I'm not -- I won't swear to it, but I don't believe I've had any communications with him.

Q I want to turn to the text pack again, the Bates number 37, and refer you to July 21st at 1:45 a.m.

Bill Taylor writes: "Gordon, one thing Kurt and I talked about yesterday was Danylyuk's point Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in Washington politics."

And then your response is what I want to ask you about, 7/21 at 4:45 a.m.: "Absolutely. But we need to get the conversation started and the relationship built, irrespective of pretext."

A Uh-huh.

Q "I'm worried about the alternative."

Could you just tell us what you meant by pretext?

A Well, the pretext being the agreed-upon interview or the agreed-upon press statement. We just need to get by it so that the two can meet, because, again, it was back to once they meet, all of this will be fixed.

Q Okay.

A So let's not argue over the form of what the condition is as long as it's -- you know, the press statement or the interview, let's just get it done so they can meet. That was my point.

Q Okay. And then you said: "I'm worried about the alternative."

A The alternative is no engagement and lack of credibility with the Ukrainians, because now it's 2 months past when the invitation. Again, they took that invitation

very seriously. Even though we may throw those around like candy, they didn't read it as that. They read a personal letter from the President of the United States saying: I'm inviting you to the White House, let's set a date. And the call hadn't even occurred yet. So --

Q Then Taylor says: "So the call tomorrow can be a positive step."

A That, I believe, was when the call was set for the 20th, which was then taken down.

Q Okay. I see. Okay.

Among the U.S. officials communicating with the Ukraine on a regular basis, whether that be yourself or Ambassador Volker or Secretary Perry, Ambassador Taylor, who on these issues was doing most of the talking for the United States?

A Taylor, number one, and then Volker, number two.

Q On these issues, about the statement and the White House meeting?

A I assume that all of the -- and I think this was Ambassador Volker's habit, that whenever he communicated with the Ukrainians he did it in coordination with Ambassador Taylor, since he's the ambassador on the ground.

Q Do you think the Ukrainians trusted Ambassador Volker?

A I believe they did.

Q And he had developed a rapport with some of them,

such as Yermak?

A Yes, I think they liked him.

Q And he was doing an effective job?

A From my perspective, he was.

Q And he's someone that's acted with integrity, as far as you know?

A Yes.

Q Both personal and professional?

A Yes.

Q And you have acted with integrity, both personal and professional, with these matters?

A I have.

Q And in the best interests of the United States?

A I have.

Q And to the extent that non-U.S. Government actors such as Mr. Giuliani inserted themselves into this, you've tried to do your best to push for the best outcome for the United States?

A Correct, which I thought was a meeting between the Presidents.

Q And Mr. Volker was doing the same thing?

A Correct.

Q And Ambassador Taylor was doing the same thing?

A Yes.

Q Do you know if Ambassador Taylor ever tried to talk

to the Secretary about getting Giuliani out of this mix?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. Did you ever ask the Ambassador or did Ambassador --

A I didn't. The only time I suggested that Mr. Taylor talk to the Secretary was in my text to him.

Q Because Rudy Giuliani has a good rapport with the President, but so does the Secretary.

A Correct.

Q And so going to the Secretary about this, was that ever considered an alternative? Maybe the Secretary should talk to the President and say, "Let us handle this"?

A It would have been an alternative. I don't know if it ever occurred.

Q Okay. It never --

A I don't know if it ever occurred.

Q How frequently did you talk with -- or do you talk with the Secretary?

A I communicate with him fairly regularly, either through Lisa Kenna or directly.

Q Okay. And by fairly regularly, is that weekly or monthly?

A Probably weekly.

Q Okay. And he's usually responsive to your --

A Either directly or through Lisa, yeah.

Q Okay. And Ambassador Taylor has a pretty good ability --

A I don't know. He certainly could get through to the Secretary if he needed to, but I don't know what their --

Q In the wake of Ambassador Yovanovitch being called home, were you a part of the discussion about having Ambassador Taylor go out to be the Charge?

A I didn't know Ambassador Taylor until he was there.

Q Okay. So you were not part of the discussion of --

A Not that I remember.

Q What can you tell us about the -- when you first learned that there was an effort afoot to remove Ambassador Yovanovitch or recall her early?

A What's the question? When did I learn it?

Q Yeah, when did you learn that there was a movement to oust her?

A I don't remember. I just remember that there were a lot of rumors swirling around in my mission that she was being given a hard time and --

Q Okay.

A Yeah.

Q Was that after March of 2019 or before?

A Well, it was probably -- the first time I really met Ambassador Yovanovitch was when I went to Odessa, which would have been in February of '19. So it probably was after

that.

Q Okay. And before the removal of or the recall of the Ambassador, did anyone consult you, given your role with Ukraine?

A No.

Q Do you know if anyone consulted Ambassador Volker?

A I don't know.

Q Did you have any communication with Ambassador Volker about Ambassador Yovanovitch's situation?

A I think Ambassador Volker anecdotally said he's very supportive of Ambassador Yovanovitch and, you know, liked her.

Q Okay. So he was disappointed, too, as far as you know, that she was recalled?

A I mean, if -- he never expressed disappointment to me, but if he said he liked her and was supportive of her, I assume he would have been disappointed.

Q Okay. I think you testified this morning about a conversation -- did you have any conversations with Ambassador Yovanovitch while she was going through this, the period between March and her recall, which was about --

A You know, counsel mentioned that I did. I don't recall it. I could have, but I don't remember it. I seem to be the one people call when they have career problems. I don't know why.

Q Did Ambassador --

A I do a lot of counseling with a lot of people, both in the public and private sector, about their careers.

Q Okay. Did Ambassador Yovanovitch lean on you for career counseling?

A We may have -- I don't remember. I honestly don't remember the conversation. I'm not denying it occurred. I just don't remember.

Q Okay. So to the best of your recollection, you never --

A It wasn't, you know, a momentous enough conversation that I would have remembered it.

Q Okay. You never encouraged her, to the best of your recollection, to tweet or something to that effect, support of the President?

A Again, I don't -- would I swear 100 percent I didn't, no, but I don't -- I just don't remember it.

Q That's all we're asking you, is your best recollection as you sit here today.

A Yeah, I don't -- I don't -- I don't remember it. I think I was writing reviews for all my employees at the time, so I was a little preoccupied.

Q Turning back to the question of whether any Ukrainian official ever told you about the suggestion that they need to investigate Biden, did that ever occur?

A No. I believe, again, to the best of my recollection, I go back to the only thing that I recall was the press statement or a live interview of some kind. And, as you described it earlier, if the implication was an investigation, that that would actually happen, I wasn't aware of that. I was aware that Giuliani apparently wanted Burisma and 2016 mentioned in one of those formats. That's what I remember.

Q I'd like to go through what you can remember of your communications with Giuliani.

A Okay.

Q You said the first one occurred in August?

A Yeah. I believe I was introduced to him electronically by Ambassador Volker around the very beginning of August, August 1st or 2nd or something like that.

Q And you raised the prospect of potentially getting together, but that never occurred?

A Yeah. I think Ambassador Volker, you know, introduced us like, this is Gordon Sondland, our Ambassador to the EU, he's helping me on Ukraine, something to that effect. And Giuliani texted back: Great, would love to meet some time. And I think I threw out a couple of dates that I was in Washington or -- we just never connected. I think we tried once or twice to meet personally, and it never happened.

Q Did you ever talk on the phone?

A Yes. I think I participated in one or two conference calls with Volker and Giuliani, and then I think I may have had one or two direct calls with him, and that was it.

Q And do you remember the dates of those calls?

A Well, they would have been likely in August.

Q Okay. So potential of five?

A Something like that.

Q Five calls?

A Something like that.

Q Okay. And do you recall the specifics of any of the calls?

A All I can recall is the gist of every call was what was going to go in the press statement.

Q Okay.

A It was solely relating to negotiating the press statement, where, you know, Volker had taken the lead on it, and then I poked my nose into it to see if I could broker some kind of a compromise so we could get moving on the White House visit.

Q And do you recall what words Rudy Giuliani used on those calls?

A Again, he kept repeating Burisma and 2016 election. He never mentioned Biden to me on any call that I was on.

Q Okay. If at all possible, I'd like to break down each of the calls to the extent you can remember them. Is that something you can do, or do they all mush together?

A They all mush together, because they were like Groundhog Day. They were the same subject matter in each call.

Q Okay. And did these calls last a long time or were they short?

A A couple of minutes.

Q All of them?

A Yeah. Well, maybe -- I don't know about the conference calls, but the individual calls were a couple of minutes at the most.

Q Okay. And who was leading the discussion?

A Volker.

Q Okay. And maybe just describe what you can of any parts of these calls that you can remember.

A I think Volker was trying to get to the bottom of what was it that the President wanted to see from the Ukrainians in order to get the White House visit scheduled. And I think Giuliani kept saying it needs to be some kind of a public utterance.

I do recall that after he met with Yermak, apparently, in Madrid, he was far more sanguine about Ukraine than prior to that meeting. Volker reported back to me that Giuliani

was happy with that meeting. But I don't know what they talked about.

Q When was the meeting with Yermak in Madrid? Was it the beginning of August?

A I don't know. I'd have to look it up.

MR. NOBLE: Steve, I believe that was August 2nd.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Beginning of August, 2nd of August?

A In Madrid?

Q Yes.

A Yeah.

Q Okay. And did you get a readout from that meeting? Was anybody with Giuliani?

A I don't know. All I do know is that Volker reported back that Rudy and Yermak had a great meeting and it looks like things are turning around.

Q Okay.

A That's what I heard.

Q Okay. So then these calls that you describe, the four or five, happened subsequent to that meeting?

A Yeah, because I don't -- I didn't meet Giuliani until at least August 1, maybe August 2 or 3, by text. By text.

Q By text and then telephone?

A Right.

Q And I know I asked you this before and I'll ask it again. Do you remember any words that Rudy Giuliani said other than Burisma and 2016? Did he use the name Bidens?

A I never heard Biden.

Q Okay. You never heard Rudy Giuliani mention the word "Biden"?

A I never heard him mention Biden. I'm not saying he didn't use it. I never heard him say it.

Q Okay. So in the -- you used the word "evolution," I think, of this story.

A Continuum, yeah.

Q Continuum. In the early part of August, the Bidens hadn't entered the timeline yet, in your mind?

A I don't think so. I don't think the Bidens had entered the timeline while we were negotiating the press statement.

Q Okay.

A Which was in the middle of August, I believe.

Q Okay. Did Volker ever tell you about meetings he had with Giuliani?

A He might have, again, in a very sort of good meeting, Rudy's happy, Rudy's unhappy. Nothing definitive. Again, I was focused on the White House meeting. That's all I cared about at that point.

Q Right.

A I had one mission, and that was my mission.
Q Okay. Did you ever hear Volker talk about investigating the Bidens?
A Never, that I can recall.
Q In these four or five conversations with Giuliani was there ever a resolution or was it sort of always touching base, Burisma, 2016, and then --
A We just could never get a press statement agreed to, and then the whole idea got dropped.
Q Okay. And do you remember when in the month of August?
A Probably mid- to late August would be my guess.
Q And was that the last time you spoke with Mr. Giuliani?
A I believe so.
Q Senator Johnson attended the Zelensky inauguration.
A I'm sorry?
Q Senator Ron Johnson --
A Yes.
Q -- attended the Zelensky inauguration. Was that the first time you had met the Senator?
A No, I think I met him during my confirmation.
Q Okay. After your confirmation but before the inauguration, did you have any particular relationship with him or --

A We might have gotten together. I can't remember if he was on one of the codels in Brussels or I may have seen him on the Hill. He was very friendly and helpful during my confirmation, so I stayed in touch.

Q Did you ever have a discussion with Senator Johnson about any of these issues, such as investigating --

A Well, I --

Q -- Burisma or 2016?

A Yeah, I noticed in the media he had come out and said that he and I had a conversation on the phone about it. And he had said that I told him -- this is the media report, and I haven't discussed this with him since that media report -- that I had said there was a quid pro quo.

And I don't remember telling him that, because I'm not sure I knew that at that point. I think what I might have done is I might have been speculating -- I hope there's no, I hope this isn't being held up for nefarious reasons.

I think we were having sort of a freeform discussion about what was going on, because he was very frustrated that Zelensky still hadn't been to the White House. I was referring to my conversation with Senator Johnson on the phone. I believe it was the end of August sometime.

Q Okay.

[Discussion off the record.]

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, yes, thank you.

The quid pro quo referring to the aid, not a press statement.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And you had never thought there was a precondition to the aid. Is that correct?

A Never, no. I mean, I was dismayed when it was held up, but I didn't know why.

Q So to the extent there were any preconditions to anything, it was perhaps with the White House meeting, but not the aid?

A I wasn't aware of it or I wasn't -- I don't recall being aware of it.

Q So your conversation with Senator Johnson was at the end of August, you think?

A I believe it was the end of August. And then I believe he told me he was going to be calling the President to find out why things weren't moving forward.

Q And did you talk to him as a followup after he did that?

A I don't think I did, no.

Q Are you familiar with the Wall Street Journal story that came out Friday, October 4th, where Senator Johnson raised this issue?

A Yeah. I think that's what flagged it for me. Someone brought it to my attention.

Q And did you ever do anything about that article, such as call the reporter or --

A No.

Q -- call Senator Johnson, or did you just --

A There's so many stories out there about what I allegedly did or didn't do. I can't chase every newspaper. I mean, this has been a very bad experience for me.

Q Fair enough.

Did you put out a statement yourself?

A No. I -- you know, there were implications that I was cooking all of this up with Rudy Giuliani throughout the year when I only met him for the first time in August. I don't know how I could cook something up with someone I had never met.

Q Have you talked to Senator Johnson since?

A I have not. But our relationship was always very cordial and friendly.

Q Okay. So you think Senator Johnson just misspoke?

A I don't know. I'm not accusing him of misspeaking. I'm saying I don't know what basis I would have had to assert on that date that there was aid being held up in return for a White House meeting. I don't know why I would know that at that point. I don't recall having been told that by then.

Q So you hadn't -- did you ever, in the course of this, ever make a statement to the effect of, you know, we're

cutting a big check to the Ukraine, you know, what should we get for this?

A That's not something I would have said. I don't remember that at all.

Q Okay. So you've never made a statement relating the aid to conditions that the Ukraine ought to comply with?

A I don't remember that, no.

Q But if someone suggested that you made that statement, that would be out of your own character, you're saying?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Have you had any communications with President Zelensky since September 25th?

A The last time I spoke to him was in person.

Q In New York?

A In New York, when he was with the President of the United States.

Q How about any other Ukrainian official?

A I think I may have chatted with Mr. Yermak right after that meeting, at the meeting after Zelensky left, and I think that was about the end of it.

Q Okay. So you haven't had any further communications with Ukrainians?

A I think Mr. Yermak reached out to me by text, and I don't think I responded.

Q Okay. Do you remember what he said to you?

A Hello, how are you? Something like that.

Q Okay. And why didn't you respond?

A I just didn't want to respond once the matter had become contentious.

Q Okay. Contentious with Yermak or contentious here?

A No, no, contentious with the White House. Because remember, I got the call from the White House about the whistleblower report at the United Nations. So it was all within a day or two of that meeting with Zelensky. So then I got the call from the White House saying: Your name is in a whistleblower -- and I just said, I'm not going to engage any further.

Q Do you still have a role in Ukraine policy?

A At this very second, no, but I would like to continue it, because I think it's critical.

Q Okay. So is it fair to say since the September 25th and subsequent events, you've pushed the pause button for yourself on your involvement?

A For myself, because, first of all, I've been consumed with preparing for these depositions and dealing with all of this other stuff.

Q Zelensky is reportedly close with an oligarch with the name of --

A Kolomoisky.

Q Kolomoisky. What do you know about his relationship with him?

A I only know of Mr. Kolomoisky anecdotally, and the rap on him is that he's a bad guy and that I think I heard he had helped Zelensky at some point during his business career or with his campaign, but Zelensky was trying to distance himself from Kolomoisky because he knew that that was the best pathway forward for the country. That's what I had heard anecdotally.

Q Okay. In your discussion with State Department officials, National Security Council officials, did anyone raise concerns that we have to evaluate whether Zelensky will be himself caught up with some of these oligarchs that are -- you know, have corrupt reputations?

A Yeah. I mean, to stay in an unclassified answer, I think there's always concern about any leader of any country where there are oligarchs.

Q Okay. We are certainly in an unclassified setting and we don't want you to go into a classified setting.

MR. LUSKIN: I just was a little concerned that --

MR. CASTOR: Absolutely.

MR. LUSKIN: -- the way you framed the question might implicate his sharing information that shouldn't be shared in this setting.

MR. CASTOR: Thank you.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q With the draft statement that Yermak and Ambassador Volker were kicking around, do you know if Giuliani ever inserted himself into that communication where he was talking directly to Yermak about it?

A I don't know if he was talking to Yermak about it, but I assume that Volker was getting his guidance from Giuliani, because Giuliani was the one that had to be satisfied.

Q Did Volker ever tell you his feelings on the statement before he drafted that one-liner at the end?

A I mean, the only conversation I have had with Volker -- I can't tell you when or where -- was that there shouldn't be any preconditions, that, you know, we were having to negotiate this statement or interview to get a meeting that should have occurred without any preconditions.

Q That was your view?

A I think that was Volker's view, Taylor's. I think it was everyone's view.

Q So that was your view, too?

A My view.

Q And Ambassador Taylor's and Volker's?

A Correct.

Q And so we're going through this exercise with Yermak and kicking around a possible statement or a TV

interview solely because of the Giuliani involvement?

A Apparently so.

Q Other than the May 23rd meeting with the President where he said talk to Giuliani, have you ever heard the President refer to go talk to Giuliani?

A Not to me.

Q Okay. So that's the only time in your firsthand knowledge that the President referred people to Giuliani on this issue?

A That's, the best of my recollection, was the only time.

Q And do you know if the President referred Volker outside of your presence --

A I don't know.

Q -- to Giuliani? Was he speaking with the President, do you know?

A I don't believe he's ever met alone with the President.

Q Okay. Did any State Department officials ever express their concern to you about Ambassador Yovanovitch's recall?

A I think there are a couple of people in my mission in Brussels who knew her well, had served with her in some capacity, and had heard that she was in jeopardy or something to that effect, and were very disappointed and expressed, you

know, she's a great person and she doesn't deserve this, something to that effect. I don't remember who it was. It could have been my DCM, but I don't remember.

Q Anybody back in Washington?

A Not that I can recall.

Q Were you aware that after the call transcript came out September 25th that there was an effort inside the State Department to put out a statement of support for Yovanovitch?

A Let me see if I get that straight. You said after the transcript of the President's call with Zelensky was released there was an effort to do what?

Q Inside the State Department there were some career Foreign Service folks --

A Oh.

Q -- that were advocating the Secretary put a statement of support out.

A I didn't know. I think I read that in the newspaper, but I wouldn't have gotten that, because I'm not a career --

Q Okay.

A -- I'm not a career Foreign Service officer.

Q Okay. So you weren't aware of any initiative inside the State Department to do something to signal that --

A I vaguely recall reading it in the paper or seeing it somewhere, but no one sent me anything internally.

Q Okay. Did the State Department do anything to signal support of Ambassador Yovanovitch?

A Not to the best of my knowledge.

Q So they didn't have an internal email or they didn't have a --

A They may have. Again, I wasn't privy to it.

Q Okay.

A I didn't see it. If you're telling me it's on my email, I didn't read it. I don't remember that.

MR. CASTOR: I'm sorry, my time is expired.

Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: Let's take a 5-minute break.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

[Recess.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's go back on the record. The time is with the majority.

Mr. Noble, you are recognized.

MR. NOBLE: Thank you, Chairman.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Ambassador Sondland, I want to direct your attention to the end of August. And my colleague Mr. Castor was asking you about the Politico article that came out around August 28th which made public the freeze that the administration had put in place on the Ukrainian security assistance. Do you recall that?

A Yes, I recall him describing it.

Q Around that time, I believe you testified that you and Ambassador Volker and the Ukrainians had dropped the idea of doing a statement announcing the investigations that Rudy Giuliani wanted, specifically Burisma and 2016. Is that right?

A Yeah, I believe the Ukrainians didn't want to go forward.

Q But you were still discussing the possibility of President Zelensky doing a public interview, possibly with a news outlet, in which he would announce those investigations?

A I think the Ukrainians mentioned to Volker that they were planning to do one and that they might incorporate some of those things in that interview.

Q Okay. So at the time when the freeze became public on August 28th and Ukraine presumably learned about that freeze, they knew that the Americans were still pushing for an announcement of these investigations. Is that right?

A I don't know when the Ukrainians found out. I mean, I don't know when they would have made the connection. They might have learned before. They might have learned after the Politico article. I have no idea.

Q Well, on August 28th it became public in the Politico article, correct?

A Yeah. I see this Politico article, yeah.

Q Okay. And then I believe in Mr. Volker's text messages, on August 29th Andrey Yermak actually sends the Politico article to Mr. Volker and asks to speak with him.

A Was that a text I was on?

Q I don't know if that was a text that you were on.

A Okay.

Q But did you have any conversations with the Ukrainians or with Mr. Volker, Ambassador Volker, about the fact that this freeze had been put in place around this time?

A I don't recall having any. I'm not saying it didn't occur, but I don't recall having any. I think Volker was handling those conversations.

Q So I'll direct your attention to -- let's go to page 20 of the text messages, and it's near the bottom on August 29th, 2019, at 3:06 a.m.

A 3:06?

Q Yeah. In the line above it, Andrey Yermak says, "need to talk to you," and then he sends a link to the Politico article from August 28th --

A Yeah.

Q -- to Ambassador Volker. So presumably at that point the Ukrainians knew about the freeze, correct?

A Apparently.

Q Did you have any conversations with Ambassador Volker about that at that time?

A I don't remember when I was brought in on the conversations relating to the freeze, you know, until close to, I believe, the Johnson conversation, the conversation with Senator Johnson. I don't know exactly what day.

Q That was August 30th, correct?

A Yeah, I think so.

Q So -- but you learned about the freeze on July 18th, when Bill Taylor texted you about the SVTC announcing the freeze?

A Right.

Q Okay. So between July 18th and August 28th, did you have any -- you never had any conversations with the Ukrainians about the fact that the aid was frozen?

A I don't recall having conversations with the Ukrainians. What I recall was trying to chase down the reason for the freeze, and I could never get a straight answer and I sort of gave up.

Q But you don't recall any conversations with the Ukrainians about the freeze?

A I won't swear to it, but I don't recall, I honestly don't.

Q So let's go to page 39 of the text messages. And I want to use the text messages, because I think they might be useful in helping refresh your recollection --

A Okay.

Q -- and kind of locking down certain dates.

Do you see up here at the top. This is a conversation between Bill Taylor and Kurt Volker. On August 30th, 2019, at 12:14, Bill Taylor says: "Trip canceled."

And then Volker says: "Hope VPOTUS keeps the bilat" --

A Right.

Q -- "and tees up White House visit."

And then Volker says: "And hope Gordon and Perry still going."

And you respond: "I am going. Pompeo is speaking to POTUS today to see if he can go."

Is that the meeting in Warsaw for the World War II commemoration?

A Yeah. This is refreshing my memory. Yes, correct, it is.

Q Okay. Do you know why President Trump did not attend the Warsaw commemoration?

A The reason that I had heard was the hurricane. He wanted to stay behind to oversee the hurricane issues.

Q President Trump was scheduled to meet with President Zelensky at that Warsaw meeting, right?

A I believe so, yes.

Q And did you attend?

A I did.

Q And who else was there?

A A lot of people.

Q I mean, for -- with any meetings with President Zelensky during that --

A Huge bilat with Vice President Pence and a whole cast of people.

Q Were you present for any conversations between President Pence and President -- Vice President Pence and President Zelensky?

A Only the one in the big bilat. I don't believe there was any pull-aside or any private conversation other than the big bilateral meeting.

Q Okay. Do you recall any discussions around that time about the link between the White House visit and the push for a public announcement by the Ukrainians of the investigations Giuliani wanted?

A I don't. I was focused more during that trip on a meeting that Pompeo and I had scheduled with the big four leaders of -- the new leaders of the EU. And when Pompeo couldn't go to Warsaw, I was worried that I had already set those meetings up for him and I to meet with the four new leaders.

So I wound up going with Vice President Pence. I sat in on the bilat. And then I came back to Brussels, I believe, and Pompeo came just for the meetings with the big four from Washington to Brussels.

Q And Senator Johnson, was he part of the U.S. delegation to Warsaw?

A I don't think so, no.

Q So it was around this time, though, it was reported that you had the conversation with Senator Johnson in which he, at least, claimed that you told him there was a quid pro quo.

A Well, that was his recollection, that wasn't mine, because I don't know that I would have known that then.

Q Do you recall the circumstances under which you spoke with Senator Johnson around this time, though?

A I think he reached out to me and said: Can we talk? And I called him, and he told me he was talking to the President the next day. And I think we were just having sort of a freeform conversation as to what was going on with Ukraine. He seemed to have a continuing interest in the same issues that I did. After we left Ukraine, you know, the Ukraine inauguration, he'd stayed in touch.

Q Do you recall whether you and Senator Johnson discussed the freeze on Ukrainian assistance?

A On that August 30th call?

Q Yes.

A We probably did.

Q Do you recall what he said to you and you said to him about it?

A No, other than I do remember he said that he was going to call the President to see if he could get to the bottom of it.

Q So it's been reported that he said that when, at least, you allegedly linked the assistance with the announcement by the Ukrainians of these investigations that the President and Rudy Giuliani wanted, Senator Johnson said he winced and his reaction was: Oh, God, I don't want to see those two things combined.

Do you have any reason to doubt that that was Senator Johnson's reaction to your phone call?

A I don't recall -- I don't recall the call going that way, because, again, I was trying to think of why would I have the basis to know that they were linked at that point. I'm not sure I did have the basis to know that.

I think we were both pipe dreaming or speculating as to why the aid still hadn't been released, because I think Senator Johnson was a strong advocate of having the aid released immediately, without any further ado.

Q Okay. So that conversation with Senator Johnson was August 30th. I want to direct your attention to page 39 again of your text messages.

A Okay.

Q And let's go to September 1st. And the very -- September 1st at 12:08 p.m., Bill Taylor writes: "Are we now

saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?"

You're on this chain, aren't you?

A Yes.

Q Does that refresh your recollection, that around this time you're aware of a possible linkage between the security assistance and the White House meeting being conditioned on the investigations that Rudy Giuliani and the President wanted the Ukrainians to announce?

A I think that was the beginning of when that allegation began to be made, because, again, I said, call me. I didn't want to do this by text. I wanted to have a conversation.

Q Did you not want to do it by text because there would then be a written record of your discussion about the quid pro quo?

A No. I already said that in my opening statement. I do that all the time.

Q Does this refresh your recollection, though, that at least around this time, you and Ambassador Volker and Ambassador Taylor were discussing at least the possibility of a linkage between the White House meeting and the assistance and the investigations that the Ukrainians were supposed to announce?

A I don't know that we were discussing it. I think

that it really came to the fore when I got the text from Ambassador Taylor a few days later.

Q Well, it was over a week later, correct?

A Or a week later.

Q So you said earlier in your testimony that you were shocked when you got the later text messages from Ambassador Taylor where he linked the security assistance and the investigations, but you were aware at least for over a week that, at least from Ambassador Taylor's perspective, this is exactly what was going on.

A Well, as I testified earlier, every time I would ask various people, whether it was at the State Department or elsewhere, what's going on, no one could give me a straight answer. I mean, I heard it has to do with the fact that Europe isn't putting up their share, it has to do with the fact that they think there's an audit that needs to be done. I heard all kinds of reasons why.

I never got -- until Taylor sent me that text saying, I hope this isn't what's going on, when I made the phone call to the President, that's when the red light really went on for me.

Q Okay. Well, back here on September 1st, though, when Bill Taylor said: "Are we now saying security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?"

You said: "Call me."

Did you guys have a phone call?

A We probably did.

Q Do you recall what was discussed during that phone call?

A I mean, if I had had a conversation the previous day -- I'm speculating now -- if I had had a conversation the previous day with Senator Johnson and we discussed the same issue, I might have continued that conversation: I hope this isn't going on.

Again, I'm speculating, because I don't really recall exactly.

And then, like you said, a week went by, and then all of a sudden I get this panicked text from Ambassador Taylor, and that's when I did my thing.

Should I have done something earlier? Maybe. I didn't.

Q I'm not asking you that. But around that time, though, this week, September 1st to September 9th, did you have your own concerns that there might be a linkage between the security assistance and the White House meeting? Which I believe you said there already, in your mind, was a linkage between getting a White House meeting in exchange for a Ukrainian announcement on the investigation.

A No, in exchange for the press statement.

Q For the press statement?

A For the press statement.

Q But the press statement was about the investigations, correct?

A Well, all I can do is repeat to you what I heard through Ambassador Volker from Giuliani. That's the only source this would have come from, because the President never discussed it with any of us.

Q And we're going to go through some of those text messages about the drafting of the statement and the evolution later on.

But right now my question is, did you personally have concerns that there were these -- that the aid was being held up, the White House meeting was being withheld, until the Ukrainians did something that Giuliani and the President wanted, specifically to announce these investigations?

A As I said earlier, the continuum --

Q Grew?

A -- grew and culminated in the text from Ambassador Taylor on I think it was the 9th of September.

Q Okay. And then in response to that, there was like a 5-hour gap between when you wrote back to Ambassador Taylor. We can turn to the last page. It's page 53.

And so Ambassador Taylor sends you this text message at, at least marked here, 12:47 a.m.: "As I said on the phone, I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help

with a political campaign."

That suggests that either you and he had had a telephone conversation about the linkage. Do you recall that telephone conversation?

A Either he and I had one or he and Volker had one. He had one with somebody, because he was, you know, clearly coming to that conclusion.

Q Do you recall if you had a telephone conversation --

A I don't recall.

Q -- with him?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. So -- and then you said in response to that, you telephoned President Trump. Is that right?

A That is correct.

Q Okay. During that telephone conversation with President Trump, you didn't ask the President directly if there was a quid pro quo, correct?

A No. As I testified, I asked the question open ended, what do you want from Ukraine?

Q President Trump was the first person to use the word "quid pro quo," correct?

A That is correct.

Q And I believe you testified that President Trump said he didn't want anything from Ukraine. Is that correct?

A That's what he said.

Q Okay. But that wasn't true, correct?

A I'm just telling you what he said.

Q But you knew that wasn't true?

A What I had heard were multiple rumors about what he did or didn't want. That's why I wanted to ask the question the way I did.

Q Well, you heard that from Rudy Giuliani, that the President wanted Ukraine to announce investigations into 2016 and Burisma, right? We've been over this a number of times.

A I heard that from Rudy Giuliani. I never heard it from the President. I am assuming Rudy Giuliani heard it from the President, but I don't know that. So I asked the President: What do you want?

Q And you assumed that, because Rudy Giuliani has been going around saying, I'm working for the President, I'm his personal lawyer, I'm doing this on behalf of the President of the United States, correct?

A That's why I went to the principal.

Q Okay. Fair enough. But I believe -- so President Trump said during that call: I don't want anything from Ukraine. But you also know that isn't true, because you've now read the July 25th call readout, correct, where President Trump specifically asks President Zelensky for, quote, "a favor." Is that right?

A Yes, but President Trump changes his mind on what he wants on a daily basis. I have no idea what he wanted on the day I called him. That's why I asked him the question.

Q Okay. But on July 25th, at least, President Trump said: I want a favor, and specifically I want you to look into the Bidens and I want you to look into 2016 election interference, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Hold on just a second.

[Discussion off the record.]

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. Counsel, I didn't know what the President had discussed with President Zelensky, because I never saw the transcript of the call. I testified to that.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Right. But you learned it, I believe, September 25th, when the call record was released by the White House at that point?

A In September, right.

Q As you sit here today, you know what President Trump --

A Today I --

Q -- said to President Zelensky.

A Today I know.

Q Right.

A Today I know. I didn't know then.

Q And today you know that President Trump asked

President Zelensky for a favor.

A Correct.

Q Specifically, to look into the Bidens and to look into 2016 election interference.

A That is correct. I do know that today.

Q And that's what Rudy Giuliani had essentially been pushing the Ukrainians to include in either a public statement or a media appearance by President Zelensky?

A He may or may not have, but not to me.

Q He used the word "Burisma" instead of --

A He always used the word "Burisma" and he always used the word "2016 election." Those are the only two things I heard from him.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, I want to ask a further question about the conversation you had with the President, where I think you've testified you asked him what he wanted and on his own he repeatedly brought up no quid pro quo, no quid pro quo. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have been not quoted in the paper in the last 24 to 48 hours, but it has been represented by multiple press outlets that you have told people that when the President told you no quid pro quo, you didn't know whether he was telling you the truth. Is that accurate?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My goal in asking the question,

Congressman, was to respond to Ambassador Taylor.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, I understand that. But my question is, it has been represented in the newspaper by someone who purportedly has information from you that when the President told you, no quid pro quo, no quid pro quo, that you couldn't verify that what he was telling you was the truth. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All I could verify is that's what he said. I don't know if it was the truth or it wasn't the truth. That's what he told me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q So, Ambassador Sondland, we're skipping around a little bit, but I want to go back to the July 10th White House meeting, and I just want to make sure we understand your testimony.

Is it your recollection that you didn't say anything during the first part of the meeting to the effect that you had an agreement with Mick Mulvaney that if the Ukrainians committed to the investigations that Trump and Giuliani wanted then Zelensky would get a White House meeting?

A I don't recall ever having a conversation with Mr. Mulvaney about that. I honestly don't. I've had very, very few conversations with Mr. Mulvaney. I wanted to have more, but he was never available.

Q But it's your testimony that you didn't say anything close to that --

A I don't remember --

Q -- during the meeting?

A I don't remember saying that. I don't remember saying a lot in the main meeting in Ambassador Bolton's office. There were a lot of people there, and it wasn't my meeting to preside over.

Q Did you ever have any conversations with Rick Blair -- I'm sorry, Rob Blair, Mr. Mulvaney's deputy?

A Yes, a couple, very innocuous, I believe.

Q Anything relating to Ukraine or a White House meeting for President Zelensky?

A I may have said when I saw him: We're working on a White House meeting with President Zelensky, do you have any updates? Because he was involved in scheduling, and I don't recall getting any definitive, again, it was we're working on it sort of answer. I'm trying to remember. I don't remember I had a meeting with him or anything like that.

Q In those conversations with Mr. Blair, did the subject matter of these investigations ever come up?

A Not that I recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to follow up, in the July 10th meeting -- and there were two meetings, one main meeting and then a followup meeting in the Ward Room.

In the first meeting, is it your testimony you have no recollection of saying words to the effect that: No, we have an agreement for a White House meeting as long as Ukraine does the investigations, we already have a meeting, we already have an agreement on the meeting. You have no recollection of saying any words to that effect?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall it.

THE CHAIRMAN: And do you have any recollection of making a similar point in the follow-on meeting in the Ward Room?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. Again, I don't recall that. In the Ward Room, we were talking about a phone call, I think, that still hadn't been made.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you don't have any recollection of in either meeting raising the issue of the desire for Ukraine to commit to these investigations?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In that timeframe, and I think that was even before the press statement, because I don't think the investigation issue began to arise until after the press statement was shelved, as I recall.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you don't have any recollection in either of those meetings on July 10th raising the issue of Ukraine conducting an investigation or ever mentioning the word "Burisma"?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember that, no. I

don't remember that.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Ambassador Sondland, in the Ward meeting do you remember ever mentioning the word "Burisma"?

A I can't say that the word "Burisma" wasn't mentioned. I don't know if I mentioned it or if Ambassador Volker did or if Mr. Vindman -- I have no idea.

Q So the word "Burisma" may have come up in the Ward Room?

A It may have.

Q And can you walk us through who was present during the Ward Room meeting?

A All I can remember is Mr. McCormack, Dr. Hill, myself, Vindman, Perry. I think Volker was there, too. I don't recall if the Ukrainians were there. I can't remember. And we asked them to wait or if we brought them in, I honestly can't remember.

Q Was Ambassador Volker's assistant Katherine Croft present? Do you recall that?

A I don't recall. I don't recall.

Q You don't recall.

What about any assistant of Secretary Perry?

A That would have been Brian McCormack --

Q Brian McCormack.

A -- who was his chief of staff.

Q Okay. And he would be the only aide to Secretary Perry that was present in the Ward Room?

A Well, there were other aides, but I don't know if they were in the Ward Room or standing outside the door. As I said, it wasn't a formal meeting. It was sort of a stand in the room and talk kind of thing.

Q Okay. So I'd like to turn to page 37 of the text messages. And to set the scene, this is around July 19th.

Were you aware around that date that Ambassador Volker had introduced Rudy Giuliani to Andrey Yermak?

A I believe I was. Is that the meeting in Madrid?

Q No, I believe that came later. But were you aware that -- did you have any conversations with Ambassador Volker about his plans to introduce Andrey Yermak to Rudy Giuliani around mid-July?

A I thought that the first introduction was when Giuliani and Yermak met in Madrid. That was my recollection, unless you have something to refresh my memory.

Q Okay. So on page 37, I want to direct your attention to July 19th.

A Yes.

Q And do you see, it's at 11:31 a.m., you say: "Talked to White House. This is moving but post election." And then Ambassador Taylor says: "If we can get a congratulatory call postelection, that could begin to

establish the relationship."

A Yeah. I mean, this call for the 20th, I believe, was scheduled like a week before that. I thought we had finally won and gotten this call done. And then, as I recall, the call got pulled down at the last minute, because someone didn't want the call to occur before the parliamentary elections.

Q And this ended up being the July 25th call, correct?

A Ultimately, yes.

Q Ultimately?

A Yeah.

Q Do you recall who you spoke to at the White House about scheduling the call, here where you say "talked to White House"?

A Let's see. It could have been Emma Doyle, the deputy chief of staff. It could have been -- I don't know. It could have been Morgan. I don't know. Someone.

And I think the -- I think the NSC was involved in the scheduling. We had gotten an email, I think, because when they do these calls they put it through an NSC scheduling protocol and then there's 50 people on the email.

And it was all set for the 20th. And I think they had gotten Zelensky ready for the 20th. And then somebody blew it up at the last minute.

Q Okay. And then later on, on July 19th, at 6:50 p.m., you write: "It looks like POTUS call tomorrow. I spike" -- I think you met spoke -- "directly to Zelensky and gave him a full briefing. He's got it."

A Yeah.

Q Do you recall that conversation with President Zelensky?

A Vaguely.

Q Okay. Tell us what you remember about it.

A It was a short call. I think I said: It looks like your call is finally on, and I think it's important that you, you know, give President Trump -- he wanted this -- some kind of a statement about corruption.

I think this was when we were at the general statement about corruption. I don't know that the Burisma/2016 issue had entered the conversation. I can't recall. But I think I said, you know: You guys will get along great.

And, you know, it was just sort of a "I'm handing it off to you now, we finally got this done." And he was very happy and said: Great, we'll have a good call tomorrow. And then, as I said, it got pulled down and never happened. And I never -- I don't think I spoke to him since after, you know, he had the 25th call.

Q At 7:01 p.m. here Kurt Volker writes: "Good. Had breakfast with Rudy this morning."

A Right.

Q "Teeing up call with Yermak Monday."

Does that refresh your recollection about when Ambassador Volker introduced Giuliani to Andrey Yermak?

A "Had breakfast" -- he said he had breakfast with Giuliani without -- it doesn't say he had breakfast with Yermak, right?

Q But then it says: "Teeing up call with Yermak Monday."

A Yeah. I think this was the call that he mentioned where he was going to introduce Yermak and Giuliani so that they could meet independently.

Q Okay. And then he writes: "Must have helped. Most important is for Zelensky to say that he will help investigation and address any specific personnel issues if there are any."

So here Ambassador Volker is not just talking about general corruption, but he's talking about some particular investigation. Do you know what he was referring to here?

A I don't.

[3:38 p.m.]

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Do you know what specific personnel issues he was referring to?

A Yeah, this had to do with someone in Zelensky's cabinet who was apparently close to Kolomoisky that Volker was concerned about and others were concerned about. They knew this person and didn't think that it would be easy for Zelensky to distance himself from Kolomoisky with this person as a senior role in the Zelensky administration, so I think they were talking about that. I remember that conversation.

Q Do you recall whether the investigation that Volker was referring to was either Burisma or 2016?

A I -- I don't.

Q But then down on July 21st, 2019 -- and Mr. Goldman asked you about this earlier -- you see at 1:45 a.m. Bill Taylor writes, "Gordon, one thing talked about yesterday was Sasha Danylyuk's point" --

A Danylyuk.

Q "Danylyuk's point that Zelensky is sensitive about Ukraine being taken seriously, not merely as an instrument in Washington domestic reelection politics."

A Right.

Q Does this refresh your recollection that at least around mid-July you and Ambassador Volker were talking with

the Ukrainians about particular investigations that Giuliani and President Trump wanted Ukraine to pursue?

A I don't recall that I had any conversations. I mean Taylor may have. And I think that when this went from corruption to other things, I think the Ukrainians just didn't won't to get involved in our election politics under any circumstances at that point.

Q And by making a statement about pursuing particular investigations that would be of political help to President Trump, they would be interfering with our domestic politics?

A I think they wanted to stay as far away from our domestic politics as they could. That was my impression.

Q And Ambassador Taylor seems to relaying that concern to you and Ambassador Volker?

A I mean he's on the front lines and he's talking to them multiple times a day. I mean, his level of contact with the Ukrainians and mine -- mine is a fraction of his.

Q So if we wanted to know what the Ukrainians were thinking and feeling and their concerns about what was being asked of them, Ambassador Taylor would be a good source for them?

A I would imagine.

Q Let's turn to page 42. At 4:27, July 22nd, near the top?

A Uh-huh.

Q Volker writes "orchestrated a great phone call with Rudy and Yermak they are going to get together when Rudy goes to Madrid in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, Rudy is now advocating for phone calls. I have called in Fiona's replacement and will call Bolton, if needed. But I can tell Bolton and you can tell Mick that Rudy agrees on a call, if that helps." You replied, "I talked to Tim Morrison, Fiona's replacement, he is pushing but feel free as well."

So during this time, did you or Ambassador Volker to your knowledge speak with Andrey Yermak in order to give him and idea of what it was that Giuliani wanted the Ukrainians to do?

A I don't remember having any conversations with Yermak about it, but I do remember that when I talked to Morrison, there seemed to be a sea change in the NSC's position on the call. Dr. Hill was, I think, less excited about doing the call, and Mr. Morrison, I think, was more supportive of doing the call. That's what I remember from this exchange.

Q And you see where Volker wrote "Rudy is now advocating for the phone call?

A Yeah. That was after he met with Yermak?

Q I believe so, but you tell us.

A Yeah.

Q Or after he spoke to him on the phone?

A All I remember is once he and Yermak made contact, whether it was the meeting or the phone call, whatever they discussed, Rudy was happier about Ukraine than he was prior to having spoken with Yermak. And I have no idea what they talked about.

Q So -- and then, I'm sorry to skip around, but in order to do this chronologically, the text is out a little out of order. If we go back to page 37, and on July 24th, it's going to be near the bottom. Do you see at the very end you wrote, "Call me, just spoke to Danylyuk, I have clarity."

A Let's see --

Q It's the last line.

A Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q Do you recall that conversation with Danylyuk and whey you -- what you had clarity about?

A Hang on just a second.

MR. LUSKIN: It will take him a minute to read through the thread.

MR. NOBLE: Sure.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The only thing I can remember is maybe it was the logistics of the call. We thought we had the call nailed down after it was taken down. And then I might have spoken to Danylyuk about how that was going to happen. I don't -- I don't remember exactly.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Okay. So around this time you were involved in trying to help arrange what turned out to be the July 25th call?

A I was trying to do whatever I could to use whatever influence I had at NSC and the White House to keep people focused on making the call and getting the meeting. That's what I was trying to do.

Q Okay. Let's go back to page 42. Now we're going to be July 25th, the day of the phone call.

A Yep.

Q You see the first entry July 25th at 7:54, it looks like you tried to called Ambassador Volker and then you wrote him, "call as soon as possible."

A Yep.

Q Do you recall what you were trying to reach Ambassador Volker about?

A I don't know was that -- was this on the 25th? Yeah, I don't know if that might have been the day I made the call to President Trump when I was on my way to Kyiv and again, it was a -- kind of a nothing call. He didn't really -- he wasn't really interested in -- and then I found out he had made the call later that day. I don't even think he told me he was making the call. Maybe he didn't know that it had been scheduled.

Q In advance of the call between President Trump and

President Zelensky were you and Ambassador Volker trying to, so to speak, prime the Ukrainians and President Zelensky as to what to expect and how to respond to the President's request during the phone call?

A Well, again, the only request I think we had heard at that point that I recall was that they wanted a strong public statement about anticorruption. That's what I had recalled knowing. And if we would have primed him, it would have been to that -- to that degree.

Q So if you turn to page 19, and we're still on July 25th, this is at 8:36, I believe.

A Yep.

Q Do see that? Ambassador Volker, and this is east coast time, and I believe the phone call with President Trump was at 9:00 a.m.?

A Uh-huh.

Q Is that right? So a little before, less than a half hour before President Trump and President Zelensky speak, Volker writes "good lunch, thanks. Heard from White House. Assuming President Z convinces Trump he will investigate slash 'get to the bottom of what happened' in 2016. We will nail down date for a visit to Washington. Good luck, see you tomorrow, Kurt." So he's writing that to Andrey Yermak, Correct?

A Uh-huh.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that a yes or no?

MR. NOBLE: Is that a yes?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. I'm sorry. Yes.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Is Kurt Volker telling Andrey Yermak that President Zelensky just needs to talk about corruption, or is he telling him that President Zelensky needs to commit to investigating the things that President Trump wanted him to investigate?

A I don't know. Am I -- is this one of my texts? I'm not on this text, am I?

Q No. I'm just asking -- well, let me ask it like this. Does this refresh your recollection that around the time right before the July 25th call you and Ambassador Volker were priming President Zelensky and Andrey Yermak that President Trump was going to be asking President Zelensky to investigate the two things that he and Rudy Giuliani had been pushing, 2016 and Burisma?

A I don't know that the Burisma in 2016 came up then. And the call I think by President Trump was made when I was in the air. I think I was on my way to Kyiv.

Q But doesn't this suggest that at least Ambassador Volker was aware that President Trump was going to ask President Zelensky to commit to investigating 2016? I mean, this text message is in advance of the July 25th call.

Correct?

A It appears to say that, but again, I wasn't -- I don't recall that.

Q So is it your testimony you had no knowledge that Kurt Volker was priming President Zelensky and Andrey Yermak to expect President Trump to make these requests and that in order to get the White House meeting, President Zelensky would have to, quote, convince Trump he will investigate/get to the bottom of what happened in 2016?

A I don't recall it happening that early. I thought it happened in August when we were negotiating the press statement.

Q But now that you see this, it seems pretty obvious that Volker, at least, was telling Andrey Yermak what President Zelensky was going to have it do to get a White House meeting, correct?

A Well, he says get to the bottom of what happened. I don't know whether that means an investigation, or -- I don't know what it means.

Q Well, get to the bottom, isn't that another way of saying look into, which are the words that President Trump used?

A Where did President Trump use the words look into?

Q In the July 25th call, at least according to the call readout.

A Oh, you mean the transcript of the call?

Q Yes.

A Yeah, I -- if that's what he said, that's what he said.

Q And in this text message itself is says Trump wants Zelensky to investigate. Doesn't it?

A It appears to, it says what it says. Yeah.

Q So is it your testimony that this wasn't a message that you'd relayed to Ambassador Volker to tell Andrey Yermak?

A No.

Q You never told Ambassador Volker that he needed to tell Andrey Yermak that to relay this message to President Zelensky?

A I don't believe so. I think -- I think Volker was talking to Mr. Giuliani. I don't remember telling Volker anything like that. Not -- again, not that soon. I don't think that happened.

MR. MEADOWS: What page are you on? What page are you on?

MR. NOBLE: Page 19.

MR. MEADOWS: So he's on these text messages, is that what you are you are what saying, because I can't find that.

MR NOBLE: No. These there text messages between Andrey Yermak and Kurt Volker. I'm just asking about his

conversations with Kurt Volker around at that time.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. But he wasn't party to the text message. Okay.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I wasn't on -- this wasn't a group, this was just Volker and Yermak, right?

Yeah, maybe they started talking about the 2016 issue back then, I don't know. I don't recall it coming up that early, as I said.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I can clarify. The text messages indicate that Volker was in communication with Yermak, and that he needed to be prepared for a conversation with the President about investigating, or looking into 2016, correct? Is that what the text message indicates?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: What it appears to indicate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it your testimony that you were out of the loop when it came to Volker communicating that with Andrey Yermak?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall whether I was in or out. I just don't remember this. As I said, I spoke with President Trump before I got on the plane, I believe, to Kyiv and it was a nothing call. I said we're headed to Kyiv to go see Zelensky and he was like, no, great, whatever. That was sort of the end of the call. We never discussed anything substantive.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q So is it your testimony that you never asked Kurt Volker to pass a message to Andrey Yermak around this time?

A I don't remember that.

Q Okay. Let's turn to page 42, this is the same day, a half an hour after the call.

A Okay.

Q So if you go to page 42, we're looking at July 25, 2019?

A Okay.

Q At 9:35 a.m.

A Uh-huh.

Q After you had tried to call Ambassador Volker, and then after the call between President Trump and President Zelensky, he writes you back, "Hi Gordon, got your message, had a great lunch with Yermak and then passed your message to him. He will see you tomorrow, think everything in place." Does that refresh your recollection that you'd asked Ambassador Volker to pass a message to Andrey Yermak in advance of the call with President Trump?

A No, because I don't know where I would have gotten that message. I never got that from President Trump. That's the only place I could have gotten it from, because I wasn't talking to Giuliani.

Q Were you talking to other people in the White House?

A No, not that I recall. And I think Yermak and I were getting together for lunch or something that next day for a drink because we were -- I think we were going to meet the President, President Zelensky the next day as well.

Q On July 26th you gave an interview to --

MR. LUSKIN: Just a moment, please.

THE CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead.

[Discussion off the record.]

MR. NOBLE: Is there something you want to clarify?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, only that I'm not denying these texts occurred between Yermak and Volker. I don't recall passing that message along. That would have been out of -- out of context, or out of order. Because the first time I recall hearing about 2016 and Burisma was during the negotiations of the press statement. Again, unless there's some text that I've completely have forgotten about, that's when I first remember getting into those issues. It was always just about corruption prior to that. It kept -- it kept getting more insidious as timeline went on, and back in July, it was all about just corruption.

MR. NOBLE: Okay. I think my time is up.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Any idea what the message was there that Volker conveyed to Yermak?

A I have no idea. No, I don't. I know that I was

planning to see Yermak at the Zelensky bilateral the next day.

Q Right.

A So, I don't know.

Q Do you remember --

A Does it indicate that Volker was talking to the White House?

Q Just flipping back to the --

A Yeah, I mean, I don't know. Everyone was talking to everyone. That was the problem.

Q So seeing these messages between you and Volker, the second half of the message doesn't refresh your recollection about what?

A Yeah, my only recollection is that the only thing that we were coaching Zelensky on, or someone was coaching Zelensky on was to tell President Trump he would be vigorously working on corruption issues at that point. That's the only thing I can recall.

Q Before you came in today, you said you collect all your text messages and you produced them to the State Department?

A Correct.

Q Did you review them?

A Some of them, yeah.

Q Okay. So when these texts are ready, are these

texts that you had recently reexamined?

A I looked at -- there were a lot of texts. I looked at some of them.

Q Okay. But not all of them?

A No. As I said, one of the problems with my involvement in this is I kept dropping in, dropping out. I was just trying to help get these meetings set up, and I was doing a lot of other thing unrelated to Ukraine at the same time.

Yeah, again, I'm not denying that the issue was raised. I just don't remember it. I honestly don't.

Q Okay.

A The 2016 issue.

Q Okay.

A I mean if everyone is saying it was raised in all these multiple texts then it probably was raised. I just don't remember the conversation because none of it seemed remarkable to me.

Q Okay. Did you ever have a conversation with Yermak about 2016?

A I don't remember. I honestly don't. There were so many conversations with Yermak, and Danylyuk, and Prystaiko and the others, I don't remember.

Q You were talking to them separate from Volker?

A No, no. We were all talk together when we were in

Kyiv.

Q Okay. But were you testing or having telephone calls?

A I think I was having some directly and some with Volker and some group, everything. But again, that may have occurred, there may have been a conversation about 2016, I don't -- I honestly don't remember.

Q Flipping back to page 19, 7/25, 8:36 a.m. text?

A Uh-huh.

Q This Volker to Yermak again.

A Okay.

Q I want to be clear, you're not on this. He says, just heard from White House. Do you have any idea where Ambassador Volker was getting that?

A I don't.

Q Who he was talking to?

A I don't.

Q You were in constant communication with him during that time, is it possible to -- who were the possibilities that he's talking to?

VOICE: I'm sorry, I don't understand who he is at this point.

MR. CASTOR: Volker, Ambassador Volker. We're trying to decipher --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could have been the NSC, I

don't -- I don't know.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Was he talking to anybody else at the White House?

A I don't know.

Q I don't know that in these discussions we've --

A I don't know who --

Q Established that Volker was --

A The problem was no one owned this file. Everyone had a little hand in it. You know, the NSC, the White House staff, everybody was involved in, you know, everyone was pushing for these meetings and the phone calls.

Q Okay.

A And I don't know who was talking to whom. All I can tell is what I was doing or what I can remember I was doing, which was trying to get the meeting. In this case, I think I was trying to get the phone call.

Q We're going to make sure our members get a chance to ask you some questions and so I want to --

MR. MEADOWS: So Ambassador, this is Mark Meadows. I want thank you for your service. Thank you, obviously, for your candor. My colleagues opposite have been consistently trying to lead you down a path to suggest that you knew that President Trump was asking to investigate the Bidens based on knowledge that you have now. But based on knowledge that you had when you met on the 26th with President Zelensky, did

investigating the Bidens come up at all during that meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to the best of my recollection.

MR. MEADOWS: Not to the best of your recollection. Did investigating the Bidens come up in your conversations on the 26th with Ambassador Volker?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, not to the best of my recollection.

MR. MEADOWS: So as we look at this, this whole context of where we are, and I'm just trying to make sure that somewhere between the questions that get added to a little bit on the end of it that they are going to try to use to say something that I have not heard you say today. I want to make sure we're just getting this very clear. When you met with President Zelensky, did he indicate that the phone call that he had with the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, was a positive phone call and he presented in positive terms to you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's all I heard was we had a great call.

MR. MEADOWS: And you and Ambassador Volker were not sent over there as a condition of a bad phone call. You were already planning to be there and this meeting you had with President Zelensky on July 26th of this year was -- was already in the works, and you were already on your way there,

or you were there when the phone call happened. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, first of all, I was invited to join Ambassador Volker in his bilateral meeting in early July. So the meeting was schedule for the week of, I believe, the 22nd of July. There wasn't even a date nailed out yet and I was invited sometime around the 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th of July.

MR. MEADOWS: So the early part of July you were invited to participate in a meeting that was going to be held with then president I guess the inauguration had happened so it would have been President Zelensky at that point.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct, sometime during the week of July 27th.

MR. MEADOWS: And that happened long before the phone call actually of July 25th, that was already in the planning stages and you had been invited. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

MR. MEADOWS: And so when you start to look at this chronological step of a phone call and what happened, all the asking you about aid and everything else in hindsight, at that particular time, the aid being held up was certainly, it did not cross your mind -- is this correct, that it did not cross your mind, that the aid was being held up because of an investigation into the Bidens?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at that time.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. And so I -- I also -- there's a whole lot of back and forth between text messages and what was included. Some of these text messages that you've been asked to opine on just, in the previous hour, were actually text messages that you were hot a part of. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

MR. MEADOWS: And so it was actually text messages between Ambassador Volker, who's already testified here for over 10 hours and given very clear indication of what he thought. So they are asking you to opine on what Ambassador Volker might have meant on text messages that you were not a party to. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Appears to be correct.

MR. MEADOWS: So I guess where I'm going with all of this is that there continues to be this leading question-and-answer process to suggest that you somehow knew that there was this quid pro quo that had happened in the early parts of May and June of 2019. Were you aware of any quid pro quo for aid or anything else that early in May or June?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I -- the only thing I was aware of that was that there was to be some kind of acknowledgment of corruption investigation at that point, I believe.

MR. MEADOWS: And does the Ukraine have a history of

corruption?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, they do.

MR. MEADOWS: Have there been prosecutors, multiple prosecutors who were going to clear up corruption in the Ukraine who never cleared up the corruption in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's what I understand.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. Is that a concern, not just to the United States, is that a concern to the European Union as well?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah it is a huge concern to them. That's one of reasons they are not all in.

MR. MEADOWS: And so, that's one of the reasons why, I guess, they send money for pillows and we send money for military defense systems. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know why they send their money.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. Do you know if they contribute to a large part to the defense of Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Apparently not enough to suit President Trump.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. How about enough to actually appease Ambassador Sondland. Do you think that they are doing their fair share, the EU?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, in my discussions with the EU, they would like to do more. They would like to see some

things cleaned up before they contribute more has been my impression.

MR. MEADOWS: So, you mean the EU has an quid pro quo in terms of their foreign aid to the Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if it is a quid pro quo. I think it is one of their conditions.

MR. MEADOWS: So they have a condition to giving additional foreign aid. So you're saying -- this is groundbreaking -- so you're saying that someone other than --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I walked right into that one.

MR. MEADOWS: -- other than Donald J. Trump is concerned with corruption, and they might withhold foreign aid based on that. Is that correct, Ambassador? I can tell by your smile it's a yes, is that correct. Are we correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: This is like My Cousin Vinny.

MR. MEADOWS: Yeah. There are two positive track tire marks here it looks like.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: To answer your question, Representative, the Ukrainians -- the Europeans are always very careful about when they contribute money to anything and they always have a list of requirements, some of which are a mile long.

MR. MEADOWS: So in your diplomatic speak, is that a yes?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

MR. MEADOWS: Thank you. I yield back.

MR. ZELDIN: And President Zelensky, Ambassador, won his election based on an anticorruption campaign primarily, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Among other things, yes.

MR. ZELDIN: What was the anticorruption aspect of President Zelensky's campaign?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think a general commitment to transparency to having less influence by the oligarchs, potentially buying the oligarchs out, or kicking the oligarchs out of some of the key industries in Ukraine, getting boards of directors that had well-recognized international figures on them that would be appealing to the Wall Street and London investment banks, and a whole host of things like that.

MR. ZELDIN: And what were some of the corruption problems plaguing President Poroshenko?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The opposite of what I just said. Cronies on the boards, too many oligarchs involved in taking bribes and kickbacks and all kinds of bad stuff.

MR. ZELDIN: And this corruption within Ukraine government was something that you were concerned about?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, I was concerned about it from the standpoint that, again, my goal was two things: was to get the Europeans aligned with us, because it was one of

the few things where we had very little daylight between us on -- we have a lot of issues with the EU, but Ukraine wasn't one of them. And the second was to get President Zelensky and President Trump together because I figured that they would hit it off, and that the United States and all the interagency, once they saw the two presidents meet, all the interagency nerve endings would start to grow together and we'd have a real solid partnership. The whole idea here is to counter Russia. Russia is the problem. Russia is what needs it be countered. And the more we bear-hug Ukraine, the less influence Russia has. So that was my strategic objective and part of my portfolio?

MR. ZELDIN: And Ambassador Volker was very concerned about corruption in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Ambassador Volker? Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Did you get any readouts of the July 25th call at all from the Ukrainian Government?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think the only readouts I remember seeing were the ones from my team, which were very innocuous, and did not represent what was actually said on the call that I found out once the transcript was a released.

MR. ZELDIN: Was there any reference to a hold on aid or a quid pro quo in those readouts?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not in the readouts I saw.

MR. ZELDIN: You met with President Zelensky on July

26th?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ZELDIN: Did President Zelensky make any reference in the July 26th meeting to hold on aid or a quid pro quo?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not that I remember.

MR. ZELDIN: Tell us about Ambassador Volker. You worked closely with him? Was it a positive experience working --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I had a great relationship with him he's a very smart guy, he's clearly very well-liked by all the Ukrainians, the old administration, the new administration. He really understands the country and he was a tremendous assets I think to the United States.

MR. ZELDIN: And he was professional at all times as far as you know from your interactions with him?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: All times when I was with him.

MR. ZELDIN: And candid and honest, is that part of your assessment, too?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, he's one of those people I would hand my wallet to. That's how I describe him.

MR. ROY: I want to clarify one thing you referenced a couple of times today. You repeatedly testified that at the outset, going back to May, going back to conversations that you've been referencing, that your perspective on the -- the only thing that you were aware of, I should say, regarding

any asks, right, out of Ukrainians, or any connection to foreign aid or anything else is you specifically said corruption, that that was the early outset. And you've referenced a continuum. And I'm trying to understand your perspective of continuum.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't believe I ever referenced in May that he there was any tie to aid. I wasn't even aware of the aid I don't think back then.

MR. ROY: Right. But from the very beginning, right, you talked about this very specifically, you've referenced only -- you've only referenced corruption, right? And you haven't referenced anything beyond that. What I'm trying to understand is your perspective of the continuum.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The continuum was, first of all, an unconditional phone call and an unconditional invitation to the White House, and then I believe the next part of the continuum was some kind of a commitment to investigate corruption generally. And then the next part of the continuum was talking about the Burisma and the 2016 election, which as I recall, was heavily discussed during the negotiation of the short-lived press statement, which only lasted a few days, and then it died. And then at the end of that continuum I became aware that there might be a link between the White House visit and aid to the Ukraine that was being held up when I couldn't get a straight answer as to why

the aid was being held up, both Senator Johnson and Ambassador Taylor raised the possibility that there might be a link. And then the aid was released, and then this whole thing blew up. That's the best I can recall the sort of progression.

MR. ROY: Going back to my colleague from North Carolina's questions, to be clear you have said that with respect to conditions that a public embrace by the Ukraines of their anticorruption activities, was a fine precondition from the standpoint of your perspective?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Absolutely.

MR. ROY: And so to his point about conditions often being placed on aid, that's not troubling to you at all?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at all.

MR. ROY: And at any point in any of these --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Did you say aid or did you say the White House meeting?

MR. ROY: I said aid.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry. I missed that. I didn't think there should by any preconditions on aid. And the reason I didn't think there should be any preconditions on aid was I thought it would send the absolute wrong message to the Russians if we held up aid for any reason.

MR. ROY: But that's a policy choice.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROY: Right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROY: But from the standpoint of putting preconditions on a White House meeting or putting preconditions on aid, that might be a policy choice. But in respect to terms of attaching any kinds of conditions to aid that's not an unusual thing to occur, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct. And so you're correct, my distinction was I didn't agree with the policy of holding up the aid for any reason whereas others may have said yes, we should condition the aid on corruption.

MR. ROY: And you testified there were debates about --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

MR. ROY: -- what the policy choices should be?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

MR. ROY: Thanks. That's all.

MR. ZELDIN: Ambassador, it is U.S. law to, when providing aid to Ukraine to be assessing the anticorruption efforts that are correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know what the law is relating to aid. I'm not an expert on preconditions for aid?

MR. ZELDIN: But I think that's an important point before declaring that there should be no conditionality on aid related to corruption; it's important to know what the United States law is as it relates to aid to Ukraine and as

it relates to corruption.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My -- my response, Congressman, was strategic, not legal.

MR. ZELDIN: We are concerned about the legal as well. Now you're the U.S. Ambassador to the EU, So you have interaction with a number of countries all across the European continent. I imagine you're engaging with countries on a whole host of issues all day, right, your portfolio's enormous.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

MR. ZELDIN: Okay. And as far as conducting U.S. diplomacy, whether it is aid or other discussions, you probably have asks into countries all across the entire continent, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: True.

MR. ZELDIN: Can you give us an idea of your portfolio as it relates to your priorities of getting other countries to do things that are important to the United States?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, my portfolio as I said encompasses 28, currently 28 EU countries, unless something happened in the last few hours with the U.K. And it involves trade, it involves security, it involves energy independence. It involves their actions in various other parts of the world, Iran, Venezuela, et cetera, et cetera. I'm not sure what your question --

MR. ZELDIN: As far as you doing your job interacting and the United States State Department interacting with foreign countries, we identify priorities that are important to the United States and try to get other countries to make decisions to adopt their policies and behaviors to our asks to the extent possible, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct and I have a long list of those asks.

MR. ZELDIN: And you have seen foreign aid get leveraged in countries all around the world for different reasons, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

MR. ZELDIN: For example, Congress recently passed, and the President signed into law legislation called the Taylor Force Act. I don't know, have you heard of that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have not.

MR. ZELDIN: So where there is a policy -- would it be appropriate where the American taxpayer would not want their tax dollars to go to the Palestinian authority if they are financially rewarding terror, that would be an appropriate prioritization of how to leverage our tax dollars, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Appears to be, yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Now, as far as Fiona Hill, did you and the NSC -- did you sense that they felt threatened at all, that you were, say, stepping on their turf by having a passion for

Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, they testified earlier, my first sort of extracurricular trip to Ukraine I met regularly with the Ukrainians in Brussels, and I don't even know that the NSC was involved in those meetings, they normally wouldn't be. But my first trip to Ukraine, which was to Odessa in February, I believe, of 2019, I mentioned to Dr. Hill that I was going with Ambassador Volker and Secretary Reeker, and she sent back a very laudatory note saying, I'm glad you're supporting Ukraine and this is great, or something to go that effect.

MR. ZELDIN: At any point did Dr. Hill ever push back on it your interest in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to me. Not to anyone that contacted me and said the NSC is not happy with your involvement in Ukraine. I've never heard that.

MR. CASTOR: I will mark as exhibit 8 the whistleblower complaint.

[Minority Exhibit No. 8
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q The whistleblower complaint was released publicly I think on the day after the call transcript was released?

A Uh-huh.

Q Did anyone talk to you about the whistleblower

complaint before it was released?

A I believe I testified that I heard from the White House counsel's office that my name -- they were giving me a heads-up a few hours before it was released. Yes.

Q Anybody else? Anybody at the National Security Council?

A I don't recall that, no.

Q In that time period?

A I don't recall.

Q Did anyone give you an advanced copy of the complaint?

A I don't think so.

Q When you saw your name was mentioned, I think it's on page 4, and then again on page 7, what was your reaction?

A I was pretty upset.

Q And why?

A Because it almost implies I was doing something wrong when I was doing my job.

Q On page 4 of the complaint under the ongoing concerns Roman III, the last sentence of that first paragraph there beginning with the word based on multiple readouts of these meetings recounted to me by various U.S. officials, Ambassadors Volker and Sondland reportedly provided advice to Ukrainian leadership about how to navigate the demands that President Trump had made of Mr. Zelensky. Does that have any

basis in fact?

A I didn't know that the President had made any demands.

Q Okay.

A I wasn't aware of any demands that he had made of Mr. Zelensky until I saw the --

Q Okay. So this statement as it relates to you is just not true. Is that true?

A Well, I think to be fair to the whistleblower, I was involved in the file. I'm not sure what he's really trying to say here. This sentence confounds me because I'm not quite sure what he's trying to say.

Q So you're not sure about what the demands were?

A No.

Q And you're also not sure about how you were helping the navigate -- helping the Ukrainians navigate the demands?

A Well, other than as I testified we tried to negotiate a press statement, the whole group?

Q Right.

A If that's navigating the demands, then I guess that's navigating the demands. And I think I also testified that I was trying to -- we're all trying to prep President Zelensky for the request that corruption be investigated.

Q On the July 26th meeting in Kyiv with Ambassador Volker, did this come up, the press statement and so forth?

A I don't think so. I don't remember that.

Q Okay. So at least at that meeting the day after the call there was no discussion that you can recall --

A No, not that I remember, and again, I saw a readout of the call, and the call was benign until I saw the transcript.

Q Okay. So it at that point, you didn't know about demands, and so it is not fair to say you were helping the Ukrainians navigate the demands?

A I don't know. I was involved in the file, and if being involved in the file means my name in the whistleblower complaint then I guess I have to accept that.

Q Flipping back to page 7. The first bullet the State Department officials, including Ambassadors Volker and Sondland had spoken to Mr. Giuliani in attempt to contain the damage.

A Is there a question?

Q I just wanted to make sure you read?

A Yes, I'm following.

Q I'm ready to ask my question now. The last hour, you walked me through all four or five conversations you had with Mr. Giuliani. Any of those conversations possibly -- could they possibly be characterized as you and Ambassador Volker trying to contain the damage to U.S. national security?

A Not the direct conversations I had with Mr. Giuliani, because, again, they just -- they were really applying to the press statement.

Q Right.

A I didn't think this the press statement constituted damage to national security.

Q Okay. So nothing that you did on a call to Rudy Giuliani could fairly be characterized as containing the damage?

A I think it's an exaggeration.

Q The second bullet, Ambassadors Volker and Sondland during this time period, meet with members of the Ukrainian administration, and in addition to discussing policy matters helped Ukrainian leaders understand and respond to the differing messages they were receiving from official U.S. channels on the one hand, and Mr. Giuliani on the other.

A Well, the problem is, I don't know what official -- I don't know what they were receiving from Mr. Giuliani --

Q Okay.

A -- because I don't know what direct conversations he was having.

Q So that also is a statement that can't be true, because you didn't know what Giuliani was doing at that point in time?

A All I know, with respect to Mr. Giuliani, is what

he told me and what I heard directly through hearsay and from Ambassador Volker.

Q But during this time period, the statement that Ambassadors Volker and Sondland sought the help of Ukrainian leaders understand and respond to the differing messages they were receiving from official U.S. channels on the one hand and Mr. Giuliani on the other can't be true if you don't know what Giuliani was telling them?

A I think a fairer thing was we were trying to assuage the Ukrainians, and as time kept going on and there were no meetings or phone calls after they had been promised. I that's probably -- we were stroking the Ukrainians a little bit in order to keep them from sort of bailing on us. I didn't want them going in the Russia direction. That was my big concern.

Q But you couldn't possibly be doing what is alleged right here because you didn't know what message Giuliani was sending to them?

A Yeah, I mean, if anything, we probably more played the role of a mediator just to try and keep things cool, while the time was going on and, you know, the meetings weren't happening. So I don't know if I would have written it exactly this way, but we're trying to help.

Q Okay. The next sentence during the same timeframe multiple U.S. officials told me that Ukraine leadership was

led to believe that a meeting or phone call between the President and President Zelensky would depend on whether Zelensky showed a willingness to play ball on the issues that had been publicly aired by Mr. Lutsenko and Mr. Giuliani. Does that strike you as something you're familiar with?

A That -- are you saying that the call that Mr. -- or President Trump and President Zelensky ultimately had on the 25th?

Q Well, during the same timeframe, multiple U.S. officials told me Ukrainian leadership is led to believe that a meeting or phone call between President Trump and President Zelensky would depend on whether Zelensky showed a willingness to play ball on the issues that had been publicly aired by Lutsenko and Mr. Giuliani.

A Well, that appears not to be true because the phone call happened without any precondition. The phone call happened on the 25th and I don't believe anything was agreed upon by the Ukrainians by the time the phone call happened.

Q Did you ever hear a U.S. official use the term "play ball"?

A I've never heard that expression from anyone.

Q Because it is in quotes?

A I don't recall ever hearing that.

Q Okay. I want to go back to the recall of Ambassador Yovanovitch. Can you tell me when you first

learned that her post was in jeopardy?

A I can't, I don't recall. As I said, I met with her when I was in Odessa, she joined us on the meetings with Poroshenko and others, and we may have had some calls after that, but I don't remember.

Q Did anyone consult with you prior it her removal?

A I don't -- I don't believe so.

Q So nobody at the White House asked for your opinion?

A I don't think so.

Q Nobody?

A I probably would have remembered that, but I don't remember that.

Q Anyone on the 7th floor of the State Department?

A No, I don't think so.

Q So nobody asked for your views on whether she was doing an effective job at that time?

A I mean I don't recall giving my views to anyone. As I said, I had a perfectly good experience with her. My limited experience that I had with her.

Q So had someone asked you, you would have --

A I can't imagine I would have said anything, but she seems great.

Q Were you surprised when she was recalled?

A A little bit. Especially after I heard from a lot

of people in the Mission that she was going good ambassador they had, as I said earlier, they had served with her.

Q Did anybody seek your input on the next ambassador?

A I don't think so, no. I don't think I ever heard of Taylor until he was in place.

Q Okay. There is an allegation, simply an allegation, I'm not endorsing it. Perhaps the Ambassador at one time or another was disparaging the President, and I think one Member of Congress wrote a letter about that, and State Department officials have been disappointed about that allegation. Did you ever hear the Ambassador disparage the President?

A Not in my presence.

Q Did you ever hear anybody in the National Security Council disparage the President?

A Yeah, Dr. Hill.

Q Okay. Could you help me understand that?

A Well, when Dr. Hill, left her post to leave the government, I happened to drop by her office to say good-bye to her. I knew she was leaving, I think, in a few days or a week. I was at the White House for some other unrelated reason and I dropped up and we sat and had coffee. And she was pretty upset about her role in the administration, about her superiors, about the President. She was sort of shaking. She was pretty mad.

Q She was mad?

A Yeah.

Q Is that the first time you saw her mad?

A First time I've seen her like that, yeah.

Q Did how long did you speak with her?

A 15, 20 minutes.

Q She wasn't mad at you?

A No, no, she gave me a big hug and said stay in touch, she was going, I think, to Brookings or something after.

Q And what did she relate to you?

A She was just upset about everything having to do the Trump administration. She was upset at the President, she was upset with Ambassador Bolton, she was upset at a lot of things.

Q What specifically did she say about the President?

A Just that the whole, you know, operation was just not well run, or something to that effect. I mean, she was kind of -- it was very unusual. I mean I've never seen her like that. She's usually pretty calm, collected, straightforward, but she was pretty emotional.

Q Was this a coffee you had with her, just you and her?

A Yeah.

MR. JORDAN: Excuse, Ambassador. When was this meeting

with Dr. Hill?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I it was a few days -- I don't know what her departure date was, but I think she mentioned she was on her way out in next few days.

MR. JORDAN: What month?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You have tell me her departure date, and then I can tell you.

MR. CASTOR: Her last day was he 19th, July 19th.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: So it probably was sometime between, I don't know, 15, 14, 13, something like that.

MR. JORDAN: After the July 10th meeting.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, I think it would have been after the July 10th meeting, because that's 9 days before she left. It would have been before the July 10th meeting and her departure.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q And what were her issues with Ambassador Bolton?

A I think she was just generally upset at the way the NSC was being run, and communication, and disorder, and just she was sort of railing.

Q She was railing against President Trump?

A Yes.

Q Railing against Ambassador Bolton?

A Yes.

Q Dissatisfied with her role?

A I don't know that she said that.

Q What else did she say? What can you tell us?

A I was -- I sat and listened. I was trying to be a little bit of a shoulder, and we had coffee. And I wished her well. As I said, gave her a hug, and I don't believe I've spoken to her since.

Q Did she mention why he was leaving specifically?

A She just said she'd had enough. She wanted to go back to academia.

Q Were you surprised by this?

A A little bit, yeah, because as I said, I've never seen her that emotional.

Q Did she tell you who would be taking over for her?

A I think she did tell me that Mr. Morrison was taking her place.

Q How has your relationship being with Mr. Morrison?

A Type, very straightforward.

Q Is he your primary contact it is NSC right now?

A Yeah. Although I got to meet Director -- or Ambassador O'Brien, I chatted with him a little bit, but generally, Bolton was not as accessible as O'Brien appears to be. So it would be Morrison and O'Brien.

Q Uh-huh.

A My two primary.

Q Do you still talk with Lieutenant Colonel Vindman?

A I don't think I have spoken with him in quite some time.

Q Okay. But not because of any falling out, it is just haven't --

A Haven't had any reason to.

Q An occasion to?

A Yeah.

Q You traveled where Lieutenant Colonel Vindman to President Zelensky's inauguration. Is that correct?

A I don't know that we traveled together, but he was there, he was part of the delegation.

Q And anything notable about that travel, did you have dinner with him or share any meals?

A I think we included him in every part of the event, or most of the parts of the event. It was really Secretary Perry was the leader of the delegation, it was up to him to decide who was doing what.

Q Did you ever heard Lieutenant Colonel Vindman criticize the President?

A Not to me.

Q Have you ever heard anyone relate to you that Lieutenant Colonel Vindman has criticized the President?

A I don't -- I don't recall that, no.

MR. CASTOR: We're almost -- our time is almost up, I want to make sure if there are any members on our side that

have a couple of questions?

MR. ZELDIN: Ambassador, was there any one else at the NSC who was critical of the President?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, not that I recall. This was as I said it wasn't an exit interview because she didn't work for me, it was a drop-by to say good-bye, and that was the only time I heard someone being critical.

MR. ZELDIN: How was relationship with Bill Taylor?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't spoken to him with whistleblower. But prior to that, it was great. In other words, he -- several times was happy that Secretary Perry, myself, and Ambassador Volker were helping support him because as he, to put in his words, he liked the high visibility support which helped his mission.

MR. ZELDIN: Why haven't you spoken to Bill Taylor after the whistleblower complaint?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't really spoken to anyone on the Ukraine file at the advice of counsel.

MR. JORDAN: In your meeting with Dr. Hill shortly before she left the White House, did you discuss -- did Lieutenant Colonel Vindman come up in any of that discussion with Dr. Hill?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think so.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

MR. ROY: Just a quick question, is it in the national

security interest of the United States that we instill confidence with respect to our relationship with other countries, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Exactly.

MR. ROY: And with respect to Secretary Perry, at any point in any of her engagement with him and the various trips and conversations repeatedly, you said you talked to him a lot, friends, was there anything that -- was his primary focus our status with Ukraine, improving that status vis-a-vis Russia, and making sure that our national security interests were being promoted with respect to natural gas, coal, economic interests, as well as pushing back on Russia, was that had the primary motivating factor behind your observation of what Secretary Perry was doing?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. My impression of the Ukrainians they were very impressed to have a cabinet level member to take such a strong interest in the country.

[4:38 p.m.]

MR. ROY: And would you characterize our current relationship with Ukraine as improved based on these engagements in trying to move the ball forward with respect to coal and natural gas, our presence vis-a-vis Russia because of those engagements?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, again, with 20/20 hindsight, now that I am privy to all of the different things that were going on that I wasn't at the time, I thought that with respect to my activities, first, my engagement with the Poroshenko team in Brussels, then ultimating culminating in a joint U.S.-EU visit to Odessa in February, attending the inauguration, inviting President Zelensky to Brussels to meet with other European leaders, which, as I mentioned, resulted in him getting to know the President of Poland and a couple of other leaders, that they've now had some productive -- I thought we were on a roll with Ukraine until all of this blew up. I was very pleased with where we were going.

MR. ROY: So all of those engagements all along in that process that you are part of with Governor Perry -- sorry -- Secretary Perry -- you can take the guy out of Texas, but you know -- with Governor Perry was moving the ball forward with respect to our policy objectives and what we were trying to do to strengthen our position vis-a-vis Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, at the time, yes.

MR. ROY: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: The time of the minority has expired. Would you like to take a 5- or 10-minute break?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That would be nice.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's shoot for resuming at 4:50, if we could.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That'd be great.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

[Recess.]

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Shall we get started again? Let's go back on the record.

And I want to recognize Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, it's good to see you again.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Nice to see you.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: I am both a member of the Oversight Committee as well as the Appropriations Committee, and so my questions are appropriations-focused.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Okay.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: You testified today -- I've been here most of the day -- that you don't believe that preconditions for aid were appropriate, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As a policy matter, I agree with

that, with respect to Ukraine --

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- at this point, at this moment.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Yes. Yes, with respect to Ukraine at this moment.

And, generally, you know, given that you have a budget, you and your staff are aware that the Appropriations Committee does, as Mr. Zeldin referenced, the Appropriations Committee, other committees, attach conditions to aid that we provide, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: And you're in the habit of following those instructions, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. And you testified today that you were initially unaware of the conditions that were put on Ukraine by the President and the directions from Mr. Giuliani?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. What about the congressional conditions?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware of the congressional conditions, because that aid would've gone directly from the respective agencies to Ukraine. It would not have passed through my hand or I don't even think the

bilateral hand.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right. And you were unaware even though you did testify today that Ukraine was a central component of your portfolio.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The meaning of my testimony, Congresswoman, was that the situation between Russia and Ukraine was very fragile at the time. We had the ambassadorial change. We had the election in Ukraine. It was very touchy. And in the scheme of the U.S. budget, a quarter of a billion dollars, while that's a lot of money, is not a lot of money.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Sure. I'm on the Appropriations Committee.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And you know that better than anyone.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Yeah.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I thought that, at that very moment in time, having any delay whatsoever, once I found out that there was a hold -- and I didn't know what the purpose of the hold was -- that any delay would send the wrong signal to Russia. That was my concern.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: But the delay that was occurring was not as prescribed by law. It was occurring because the President, through Mr. Giuliani, appears to have indicated that unless there were investigations against the Bidens or

the company --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't know why.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right.

However, you were or you were not aware of the Appropriations Act requiring that the Pentagon certify that when Ukraine -- when they deemed Ukraine meeting the requirements of reducing corruption, that those funds would be released? Were you aware during any of this period of time of those requirements?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not aware.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. So, at no time, even though this was a central component of your portfolio, did it come up in any conversations that the law actually required that the Pentagon certify that Ukraine had taken steps to reduce corruption.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As I indicated, my objective was to simply secure a meeting for President Zelensky. I was not involved --

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: But that was not my question. My question is, during any of these conversations during this period of time, did it ever come up that Congress actually had required that the Pentagon certify that Ukraine had reduced corruption and then that aid could be released?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall that ever coming up.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay.

So, as you said, you didn't believe that non-lawful preconditions would be required. Would it be your testimony today that complying with the law and then the funds being released is important?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think complying with the law is always important.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. Well, are you aware that on May 23rd, the same day as the meeting that you talked about with the President after you attended the inauguration, the Pentagon did certify that Ukraine had taken steps, the steps necessary as required by the Appropriations Act, to reduce corruption and that the funds should be released?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I wasn't aware.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. So, then, wouldn't you agree that, given that that occurred and that the Pentagon indicated that they had complied and corruption had been appropriately reduced, that those funds should've been released?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not familiar, Congresswoman, with all of the conditions, whether it was simply that certification or there were other conditions necessary. I don't know enough about --

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: No, but --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- the vagaries of funds

released --

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Well, the Pentagon did. Because the Pentagon wrote a letter that I have here in my hand that specifically said, Ukraine is in compliance with this public law, and the funds, as a result, you know, should be released. And they had certified that their release was appropriate.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Let me answer your question this way. If all lawful conditions had been met for funds release, then the funds should've been released.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Right. Okay. So then it would not have been appropriate for conditions unrelated to the law to be attached further.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If the law required the funds to be released, they should've been released.

MS. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Okay. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just have a couple followup questions before I hand it back to Mr. Goldman.

My colleagues on the minority asked you questions along the lines of, don't other countries, doesn't Europe attach conditions and sometimes those conditions involve fighting corruption, and I think you said that, yes, those kinds of conditions are imposed. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: But you would distinguish between conditions to fight corruption and a condition imposed to get Ukraine to investigate a political rival for help in a reelection campaign. You can distinguish between those two things, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can.

THE CHAIRMAN: The one is appropriate; the one, very much not appropriate. Am I right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you never heard Europe, for example, express its desire to have a condition on its aid to Ukraine that Ukraine investigate the Bidens or the 2016 election in a way that would help Donald Trump. I assume Europe never expressed that view to you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Never heard that from Europe.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to ask you a couple followups on the questions about the whistleblower complaint. You were asked whether it was fair for the whistleblower to suggest that you or others had to navigate the demands that were imposed for a call or a meeting with President Trump.

There were demands, weren't there, that an investigation take place of 2016 or Burisma? Ultimately those were demands, were they not?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Ultimately, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And it's fair to say that you had to

navigate those demands, you had to accommodate what the President and his lawyer wanted, if you were going to set up this meeting you thought very important?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think that's fair.

THE CHAIRMAN: My colleague also took issue with the whistleblower characterization of differing messages.

You would agree that Rudy Giuliani was meeting and talking to Ukrainians, would you not?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you did not have full visibility into what he was telling the Ukrainians, did you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did you have a concern that what we might be telling the Ukrainians was not perfectly consistent with what you and Ambassador Volker or others might be telling the Ukrainians?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, and that's why in my statement I said we would've preferred to let the State Department handle the relationship.

THE CHAIRMAN: And, indeed, having a back channel or a second channel through the President's lawyer could cause damage if that message was inconsistent with State Department policy.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could.

THE CHAIRMAN: And so part of your role was to try to

contain whatever damage that second channel might cause? Is that fair to say?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, "containing the damage" implies that we would let the damage occur and then somehow try to fix it. I mean, our goal was never to have damage in the first place.

THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you said, Ambassador, that over time things got more and more insidious. I think those were your words. It started out with no condition, and then there was a condition for investigation into the corruption, and then there was a condition of an investigation into 2016 and Burisma, and then on the call itself it became clear the condition was investigation of 2016 and the Bidens. I think you described that as becoming more and more insidious, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: And isn't it also fair to say that because there were added conditions to this meeting that Ukraine desperately wanted and that you wanted to make happen, that that meeting wasn't going to happen unless Ukraine played ball in meeting the demands of the President and Mr. Giuliani? Isn't that a fair use of that colloquial expression?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that expression came up in previous testimony, and I'd never heard the term "play ball."

THE CHAIRMAN: But you understand what that means, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you mean that those conditions would have to be complied with prior to getting a meeting, that was my understanding.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Goldman.

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

BY MR. GOLDMAN:

Q You testified in the last round that, since the whistleblower complaint was released, or the transcript of the call record was released, you haven't spoken to anyone on the Ukraine file at the advice of counsel. Is that right?

A Except, I believe, with, as I recall, just Secretary Perry. I think I testified to that earlier.

Q Okay. But Secretary Perry was one of the three amigos, no?

A Correct.

Q So he was on the Ukrainian file?

A And then I did -- I also testified I think I called Ambassador Volker to thank him for his service when he resigned.

Q Right.

You also -- I believe you said that you got a general read-out from someone on your staff of the July 25th call?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Did you get any read-out from the Ukrainian side of that call?

A I don't remember seeing a Ukrainian read-out. If someone sent me one, I didn't internalize it.

Q How about a verbal read-out?

A The only verbal read-out, Mr. Goldman, was, "It was a great call." I mean, no one thought the call was remarkable other than the fact that, A, it had finally happened after multiple attempts, and, B, that the President's -- whatever their conversation was seemed to be a pleasant conversation.

Q And you had an hour-long meeting with Mr. Zelensky the day after the call, right?

A Right.

Q And this was a significant achievement, to get the call at this point, correct?

A Correct.

Q And as part of your duties and responsibilities, you generally memorialized what occurred at meetings with high-level leaders, right?

A I always have note-takers. And, as I said, this was Ambassador Volker's meeting that he invited me to.

Q Right. So you had a note-taker there for this meeting?

A I didn't have one. I assume Ambassador Volker had one.

Q So you did not have a note-taker.

A I did not have a note-taker.

Q Do you know whether anyone from the United States delegation there for this meeting was taking notes?

A I assume someone was taking notes. There were quite a few people at the meeting.

Q And someone from the State Department?

A Probably.

Q Okay. And those notes would be transmitted back to Washington in some way?

A If they were taken by the Kyiv Embassy, they would've been put into some cable form and sent back, yeah.

Q Okay. So, presumably, there is some memorialization of that meeting within the State Department records, right?

A I believe that's correct.

Q Okay.

You also said in your opening statement that there are documents that the committee doesn't have that you think would corroborate your testimony here today. Is that right?

A I believe so.

Q Can you describe, generally speaking, what those documents would include?

A Texts, emails, et cetera.

Q Any memos that --

A No. I think they were all electronic.

Q All electronic?

A Yeah.

Q On your personal phone?

A I use a dual-SIM phone for both personal and business.

Q Okay.

Do you recall that you gave an interview on Ukrainian television the day after the call on July 25th?

A Uh-huh, I do.

Q Do you recall that you said that there were, quote, "certain things that the Ukrainians have to do, there are preconditions to anything," when describing the potential White House meeting?

A If I said that in the interview, yeah, I'm sure that's true.

Q What did you mean by that?

A At the time, I probably meant, you know, getting the schedule straight, getting the commitment. I think that was when we were still, on the corruption continuum, on the plain -- on the vanilla corruption part of the continuum.

I didn't want to imply, I believe, to the interviewer that the meeting was going to occur, you know, the next day.

I didn't want to not have credibility with the Ukrainian media. So I wanted to, sort of, thread the needle of looking like we were being very supportive of Ukraine, things were moving forward, but there still had to be some things to be done before the meeting could occur.

Q Right.

And just to be clear, the text message between Kurt Volker and Andrey Yermak where Volker specifically identifies the message that President Zelensky needs to give to Donald Trump, that does not refresh your recollection on -- which was the day before this interview -- that does not refresh your recollection as to what the state of play was as to what the conditions were for the White House --

A No. As I said, I think that part of the time we were still in the corruption -- vanilla corruption part of the continuum, as I recall.

Q Okay.

We talked a lot about the statement, so let's get to that. I want to turn your attention to page 4 of the text messages, which is exhibit 3.

A Okay.

Q And at the very bottom of that page, on August 9th at 11:27, you write to Rudy Giuliani: "Hi Mr Mayor! Had a good chat with Yermak last night" -- oh, I'm sorry. This is Kurt Volker writing this.

A Okay.

Q So you are -- but you are on the -- you were on this -- well, let me ask you this. Do you see the number [redacted] there?

A That's my number.

Q Okay, that's your number. So you're on this chain, right?

A Yes.

Q And Kurt Volker writes, "Hi Mr Mayor! Had a good chat with Yermak last night. He was pleased with your phone call. Mentioned Z making a statement. Can we all get on the phone to make sure I advise Z correctly as to what he should be saying? Want to make sure we get this done right. Thanks!"

And then you respond, "Good idea Kurt. I am on Pacific time." Do you see that?

A I do.

Q And then a little bit below it, you organize for State Ops to organize the phone call.

Do you remember having this conference call on August 9th with Kurt Volker and Rudy Giuliani?

A Vaguely. This is one of the calls I think I described in my previous testimony with Rudy. I think this was one of the conference calls.

Q Right. And this is specifically referencing a

statement, correct?

A Right.

Q And, clearly, Yermak was aware, Yermak being a senior advisor to President Zelensky, was aware of the desire for a statement based on this text. Do you agree with that?

A I do.

Q Okay. So what do you recall about that conversation?

A Again, without knowing exactly where we were on the, as I want to call it, the continuum, this might have been beginning to morph into the press statement where the Burisma/2016 election may have been introduced by Rudy.

I don't remember which call that was on, but, at some point, as I testified earlier, it went from a generic corruption requirement to a more specific requirement. And it could've been on this call; it could've been on a subsequent recall. I don't recall.

Q Okay.

If you can go to page 42, on August 9th, 5:35 p.m. -- and this is a text chain between you and Kurt Volker -- you say, "Morrison ready to get dates as soon as Yermak confirms."

Is that Tim Morrison, the NSC senior director?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And then Kurt Volker responds, "Excellent!! How did you sway him? :)" You respond, "Not sure I did. I think potus really wants the deliverable." Volker responds, "But does he know that?" And you respond, "Yep."

What is the deliverable?

A The deliverable, I believe, was the press statement.

Q And here you're specifically referencing the President, who wants the press statement.

A That was my surmise, again, based on what I had heard through Volker from Giuliani.

Q Right. So you still were under the impression, in part based on the May 23rd meeting, that what Rudy Giuliani wanted related to Ukraine is what the President wanted related to Ukraine.

A That's the only logical connection I could make.

Q And then when Volker says, "But does he know that," and you say, "Yep," who's "he"?

A I think he was referring to Morrison.

Q Okay.

Now, later -- and then a little bit lower, at 5:51, you say, "To avoid misunderstandings, might be helpful to ask Andrey for a draft statement (embargoed) so that we can see exactly what they propose to cover. Even though Ze" -- that's Zelensky, right?

A Right.

Q -- "does a live presser they can still summarize in a brief statement. Thoughts?" And Kurt Volker says, "Agree!"

So do you know what happened? Did Volker recommend that the Ukrainians send a draft statement to you?

A As I recall -- this is refreshing my memory, and, as I recall, this is when I believe there was talk about having a live interview or a live broadcast. And what I was concerned about was that Zelensky would say whatever he would say on live television and it still wouldn't be good enough for Rudy, slash, the President, and then we would be having to go back and tell Zelensky, sorry, not good enough, and that would be extremely embarrassing.

So I had suggested, why don't you give us a summary of what you're planning to say so that it can be run by Mayor Giuliani first to nail down what it is exactly that the President was asking or Giuliani was asking versus what Zelensky was intending to say? I didn't want there to be a false press statement made live that was inadequate in some way. And I was, again, just trying to protect our reputation with the Ukrainians.

Q Okay.

And then on August 10th at 1:23 p.m., you write, "I briefed Ulrich. All good."

Who's Ulrich?

A That's Ulrich Brechbuhl, who is the counselor to the Secretary.

Q And do you recall briefing him on this?

A I may have walked him through where we were.

Q About the statement?

A Probably.

Q And what was his response?

A Based on my text, his response was probably, "Fine." If he had had an adverse reaction to what was going on, he would've said something to me and I probably would've communicated it back. So, again, I'm speculating that I briefed him and everything was copacetic.

Q Okay. Do you know if he consulted with Secretary Pompeo on this?

A His habit is to, you know, consult with Secretary Pompeo frequently. I mean, that's why he's the counselor.

Q Do you recall receiving specific authorization from Secretary Pompeo to go forward with arranging the statement with Rudy Giuliani?

A Well, we never got the final statement. There was nothing --

Q I know, but --

A There was nothing to ask Secretary Pompeo until we were ready to go.

Q Well, you felt the need to brief Ulrich Brechbuhl.

A I talk to Ulrich all the time, just to keep him in the loop.

Q Okay. And so you don't know whether or not --

A No.

Q -- Secretary Pompeo was aware of this or not?

A I wasn't going to take anything back to the higher-ups until we had a tentative commitment from the Ukrainians, again, so I wasn't wasting anyone's time.

Q And you knew you needed a commitment that satisfied Rudy Giuliani's desires, right?

A I knew I needed a commitment that, yes, that Rudy Giuliani would represent that then there would be a meeting.

Q Okay.

But the next text is a little bit later on August 10th, where Volker writes, "This came in from Andrey." Is that Andrey Yermak?

A Presumably.

Q And then he says, quote, "Hi Kurt. Please let me know when you can talk. I think it's possible to make this declaration and mention all these things. Which we discussed yesterday. But it will be logic to do after we receive a confirmation of date. We inform about date of visit and about our expectations and our guarantees for future visit. Let's discuss it."

What's going on here?

A I think this was the back-and-forth between the Ukrainians and Volker. What comes first, the chicken or the egg?

Q Uh-huh. Meaning, they wanted to get a date for the White House before they made an announcement about these investigations? Is that correct?

A Presumably that's what was going on.

Q Did you subsequently have another conversation with Andrey Yermak?

A Well, I had many conversations, but I don't know if we had any about this.

Q Well, I mean, you see that it says -- oh, I guess this might be with Kurt Volker.

A Yeah. No, but if your question was, after whatever the date was, did I have any other conversations with Yermak, I think the answer would be yes.

Q Okay.

So, at the very bottom, on the 11th, Volker says, "Hi Gordon -- ready in 10 min?" You say, "Yes." Volker says, "He needs another 15 min. So 10:15."

Do you think that's a reference to Yermak?

A I don't know.

Q You don't remember speaking to Yermak directly at this time?

A I don't. I think, again, Kurt was handling the back-and-forth on the press statement, and I kept the State Department informed through Ulrich Brechbuhl as to what was going on so that everyone was on the same page.

Q And then if I can go back to page 5 with you --

A Yeah, I was trying to navigate. Where are you, I'm sorry?

Q Page 5.

A Page 5? Oh.

Q Yeah, the group text with Mr. Giuliani and Kurt Volker. On August 11th at 10:28, Ambassador Volker writes, "Hi Rudy -- we have heard bCk" -- I assume that's "back" -- "from Andrey again -- they are writing the statement now and will send to us. Can you talk for 5 min before noon today?"

So do you know if you ever had another conversation with Mr. Giuliani about this?

A I think we had at least two conference calls, and this may have been the second one or the first one. But, again, this was when we were in the process of going back and forth on the wording of the statement.

Q And describe in those conference calls what Rudy Giuliani -- what requirements he had for the press statement.

A This was when, in mid-August? Yeah, mid-August. This was when we were in the Burisma/2016 election part of the continuum.

Q Uh-huh. So he didn't say, we need to have a statement that says that Ukraine must continue their anti-corruption efforts, right?

A I believe it then morphed -- when we started to work on the statement, it morphed from the vanilla corruption into the Burisma/2016 portion.

Q Okay.

Now, if we go to page 43 -- wait 1 second. Sorry, 23.

A Twenty-three?

Q Yeah.

So, at the bottom, the very last text -- this is a group text with you and Andrey Yermak and Kurt Volker -- Volker writes, "Special attention should be paid to the problem of interference in the political processes of the United States, especially with the alleged involvement of some Ukrainian politicians. I want to declare that this is unacceptable. We intend to initiate and complete a transparent and unbiased investigation of all available facts and episodes, including those involving Burisma and the 2016 U.S. elections, which in turn will prevent the recurrence of this problem in the future."

Is this the revised proposed statement with Rudy Giuliani's input?

A It might've been. I don't know if that language came from Giuliani or it came from Volker or if it came from

the Ukrainians. I really don't know.

Q Was this approved language by Giuliani?

A I don't know.

Q You don't know?

A I don't know if it was approved or it was draft or what.

Q But -- and so you don't know if this was sufficient -- if the Ukrainians released this statement --

A I don't know if it was sufficient.

Q You don't know if it was sufficient.

A No, I don't.

Q But is this consistent with what Rudy Giuliani had indicated he wanted in the statement?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

And so, to the extent that you were involved, in your role, in advocating for a White House meeting and whether and to whatever extent that a condition of that White House meeting was some sort of investigation, is it accurate that whatever that investigation was that the President needed was described or proscribed by Rudy Giuliani?

A All the communication flowed through Rudy Giuliani, and I can only speculate that the President was instructing his personal lawyer accordingly. I don't know. I don't know if this was coming out of Rudy Giuliani irrespective of the

President, because I wasn't involved in those conversations.

Q But when you describe this continuum --

A Yes.

Q -- as to, you know, whatever the condition is for the White House meeting and it evolves over time, whatever the evolution of it was was dictated by Rudy Giuliani.

A Correct. Either directly or through Volker or Perry or others.

Q Okay.

Now, you said the statement was never issued by the Ukrainians, correct?

A I believe the idea was shelved.

Q Do you know why?

A I don't.

Q Do you know who determined that it was shelved?

A I don't know that we ever got to a point where everyone was in agreement.

Q Okay.

Now, around this time period, in mid-August, do you recall an unofficial meeting with a Member of the House of Representatives at the Brussels airport?

A Refresh my memory.

Q Did you meet with anyone, any members of the Intelligence Committee, without staff at the Brussels airport on or about August 16th?

A I may have. I don't know. You mean in the lounge?
Q Yeah, in the lounge.
A Yeah. Who I did meet with?
Q I mean, you tell me. Do you remember?
A I don't remember. I meet with a lot of people as I'm coming and going.
Q Do you remember meeting with Representative Nunes at that time?
A I saw Representative Nunes in Brussels when he had a meeting there. I think we -- I think I saw him and we had coffee or something. But that wasn't at the airport; I think that was in the city.
Q Okay. Just the two of you?
A Yeah, I think it was just the two of us.
Q Did you discuss Ukraine at all in any way?
A No, I think it was just a, you know, shoot-the-breeze sort of conversation, as I recall it. Just sort of a friendly, he's in town kind of thing.
Q You don't recall Ukraine coming up at all?
A I don't remember Ukraine coming up.
Q Okay.
You've obviously discussed and described some of the conversations you had with Senator Johnson about Ukraine. Are there any other Congressmen or Senators that you remember discussing Ukraine issues with?

A Not that I recall. Senator Johnson, because he was on the delegation.

Q And no one else?

A Not that I can remember.

Q How about staff members from any committees in the House of Representatives?

A I mean, one of the problems with my memory is that if I wasn't in Washington I'm most often in Brussels. Unless they were in Brussels and they were coming through in a codel and asked me about it specifically, I don't know that I sought anyone out to speak to them about Ukraine.

Q Uh-huh. And did you have any conversations with any of the minority staff before your testimony here today?

A Not to the best of my knowledge, no.

Q No?

A No.

Q Did your attorney?

MR. LUSKIN: I spoke with Mr. Castor. We did not share Ambassador Sondland's statement --

MR. GOLDMAN: You want to repeat that?

MR. LUSKIN: We did not discuss the substance of his testimony, and we did not share Ambassador Sondland's statement with him in advance.

MR. GOLDMAN: All right.

THE CHAIRMAN: At this point, let me recognize the

members for questions.

Mr. Himes, do you have some questions?

Mr. Heck?

MR. HECK: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ambassador, just to nail down a couple foundational facts, you were confirmed by the Senate on June 28th of last year in a presumably unanimous voice vote?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. HECK: And a short 12 days later, you were packed up and had moved to Brussels?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I was confirmed quickly because that was the NATO summit and I had to be Europe for the NATO summit.

MR. HECK: Where were you living prior to that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Seattle, Washington.

MR. HECK: Is that your legal residence?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It is.

MR. HECK: Do you have a driver's license?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

MR. HECK: What State issued it?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Washington.

MR. HECK: Are you registered to vote?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I am.

MR. HECK: In which State?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Washington.

MR. HECK: Thank you, sir. That's all I have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Representative Rouda.

MR. ROUDA: Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassador, for being here.

I know it's tough to remember all these conversations and texts and the essence of it over many, many months. And, you know, I can't even remember what I had for lunch yesterday, and I know you had a tough time remembering your conversation with Secretary Perry yesterday.

So I really want to focus on the continuum. And when President Zelensky came into office and won the election, he won based on a platform of fighting back against corruption, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROUDA: And I think the diplomatic consensus, your consensus with your fellow leaders, Volker, Dr. Hill, Yovanovitch, Bolton, everyone felt this was a good change to address corruption in Ukraine.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

MR. ROUDA: And that this was better than the previous President, the previous President who many believed was very corrupt, including the people who voted in Ukraine.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROUDA: So, in that continuum, as you talked about, where it moved from corruption to Burisma, what was so

special about Burisma? I mean, when that name came up, what was your reaction? Why Burisma?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know. In hindsight, I should've asked more questions about Burisma. But it was something that was important, apparently, to Mr. Giuliani and to the President. And, again, my focus was on getting the meeting and getting the phone call.

MR. ROUDA: But corruption has been rampant in Ukraine for decades. And if a new President is coming in who's, we hope, better positioned to address corruption, why is it moved to a single company and not multiple companies with a long history of corruption?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: First of all, I agree with you, I think there should not have been any preconditions to the meeting. I think the meeting should've just taken place shortly after the inauguration.

MR. ROUDA: But were you curious as to why this name of one company came up?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, as I said, also Naftogaz came up, and there was a general consensus or list of apparently a bunch of investigations relating to corruption that had been suspended under the previous President that President Zelensky, I believe, in his platform had said, I'm going to restart all of these investigations. And I don't even know what they related to.

MR. ROUDA: But I guess the part I'm struggling with is, you're a really smart guy. You've been incredibly successful, so successful, you're able to give a million dollars to the inauguration for Trump. And you're in this diplomatic position where it's really important that you understand all of the information so that you can put the best foot forward for our country in the relations with not just Ukraine but all the countries in your portfolio. You want to make sure that you don't step into anything accidentally that would reflect poorly on the country.

So, again, I'm just kind of curious, why aren't you curious to know more about Burisma?

A Yeah, I mean, this was -- without sounding like I'm passing the buck, this was primarily Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker's file. And in terms of this issue, I was there to lend support. I'm not, you know, shirking my responsibility, but it did not rise to the point, until the meeting never occurred, that I began to get more and more suspicious about what was going on.

MR. ROUDA: So you didn't ask anybody, hey, why Burisma?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not.

MR. ROUDA: Okay. Did you ask anybody about, why the 2016 election, what about the server, what's that all about?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, that -- President Trump, when he brought it up, you know, "They tried to take me

down," I assumed it had something to do with that.

MR. ROUDA: So with Zelensky coming into the Presidency and his administration, the hope is that corruption is going to go down. How long did President Trump freeze the aid to Ukraine in 2018?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

MR. ROUDA: You're not aware?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Are you saying in 2019 or 2018?

MR. ROUDA: I'm saying 2018.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

MR. ROUDA: Did he freeze the aid?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know.

MR. ROUDA: You don't know.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know.

MR. ROUDA: But you were --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I only became Ambassador in middle of 2018. I wasn't --

MR. ROUDA: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

MR. ROUDA: So you think if he did freeze the aid you would've known about it?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. ROUDA: You represent 29 countries in your portfolio. How many of those countries receive aid from the United States?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, the aid flows through the bilateral ambassador, not through the EU. So I wouldn't know whether a country is getting aid or not getting aid.

MR. ROUDA: But you knew Ukraine was getting aid.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not know Ukraine was getting aid until this all came up in 2019 and I heard that there was a freeze on the aid and it was in the context of another obstacle to getting the meeting.

MR. ROUDA: So, to the best of your knowledge, President Trump, in 2018, when, arguably, Ukraine is under a more corrupt administration, no aid was withheld from Ukraine under President Trump's administration?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you say so, Congressman. I don't --

MR. ROUDA: Okay. And you're not aware of any aid being withheld to the other 28 countries in your portfolio under President Trump in 2018 or 2019. You're not aware of it.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I haven't received any complaints.

MR. ROUDA: Okay.

And I know it's really tough to recall all this stuff, you know, these conversations. Some of them have taken place in the past. But I am kind of curious, because when you recalled your conversation with Ambassador Yovanovitch, you were very specific. A lot of detail there about how emotional she was, how mad she was, how she was railing on

Trump and Bolton.

Why do you think you had such greater recollection on your conversation with her? I'm sorry. Hill. Sorry. Hill.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was Dr. Hill.

MR. ROUDA: Dr. Hill. My apologies.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only because it stuck out to me because it was so unusual. That was not her usual deportment.

MR. ROUDA: Even thought many of the things we've talked about today are highly unusual, that one seemed to really resonate?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It resonated with me because I've never seen anyone so upset.

MR. ROUDA: Okay.

The last thing I want to ask you: My understanding is Secretary Perry resigned.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't know that. I haven't had any -- I haven't had any phone access.

MR. ROUDA: Don't hold me to it. The reports may not be correct, but -- so you weren't aware of that? That's a --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. ROUDA: -- surprise to you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Absolutely.

MR. ROUDA: Okay. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In fact, we are scheduled to meet

on Sunday in Brussels for an energy conference. So, all news to me.

MR. ROUDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Krishnamoorthi.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Mr. Sondland, on April 21st, President Zelensky was elected President of Ukraine, and around that time Donald Trump made a phone call to him, congratulating him, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe that's true.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And were you a part of that phone call?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was not.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Were you briefed before or after that phone call about the contents of the call?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was not.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: I wanted to ask you about Ukraine. Do you have any interests in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: No business interests?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None whatsoever.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: When you said in your statement, on page 8 of your statement, you did not understand until much later that Mr. Giuliani's agenda might have also included an effort to prompt the Ukrainians to investigate Vice President Biden or his son or to involve Ukrainians directly or

indirectly in the President's 2020 reelection campaign, why did you -- why do you think that either of those activities are problematic?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Because I believe I testified that it would be improper to do that.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And illegal, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not a lawyer, but I assume so.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Sir, one last question, which is: Do you believe that, with regard to Burisma, that the effort by Giuliani to investigate Burisma, now that we know that it was actually intended to go after Mr. Biden's son Hunter, was ever a proper inquiry?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean, I think I testified to that at the beginning, that it would not be proper.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: And illegal, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I'm not a lawyer. I don't know the law exactly. It doesn't sound good.

MR. KRISHNAMOORTHI: Thank you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You're welcome.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't remember the order in which people came in. Who would like to be recognized next? I'll leave it to either one of you.

MR. ESPAILLAT: Ambassador, I want to go along the same line of questioning. I mean, obviously, the acknowledgement of corruption seems to be a prominent issue.

First, in your testimony, for example on page 6, you say, "Corruption poses challenges to the legitimacy and stability of government. Corruption is also an economic issue."

Then on page 7, you again state that "to make reforms necessary to attract Western economic investment and to address the Ukraine's well-known longstanding corruption issues."

Again on page 7, you refer to President Zelensky as "a reformer who received a strong mandate from the Ukrainian people to fight corruption and pursue greater economic prosperity."

So corruption seems to be an important issue, as you've highlighted in your testimony today, in your statement. And, furthermore, it seems to be of greater importance when the names of Burisma and the 2016 election continuously pop up, as you've stated in your statement and in your testimony today.

How many folks do you have working for you? What's your team like? How many people do you have working for you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: About 150.

MR. ESPAILLAT: You have 150 people working for you. At any time when you heard the word "Burisma," as it was connected to corruption, did you ever instruct any of your 150 staffers to research the company?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I did not. Again, Ambassador Taylor and Ambassador Volker were, sort of, on the front lines of this.

MR. ESPAILLAT: Did anybody google the word "Burisma," yourself or a staffer?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I didn't do it. I don't know about anyone else.

MR. ESPAILLAT: So none of your 150 staffers, nor yourself, after being deliberately concerned about corruption in the Ukraine and hearing consistently the name "Burisma" come up, not one of your staffers, 150 of them, nor yourself, ever researched the company or googled the company or find out who was on its board of directors? Is that accurate?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's correct.

MR. ESPAILLAT: Okay. Now --

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Our time has expired, but we'll be happy to come back to you in the next round.

Mr. Castor.

BY MR. CASTOR:

Q Going back to exhibit No. 8, the whistleblower complaint, exhibit 8 --

A Exhibit 8?

Q Exhibit 8.

A Okay.

Q Page 4. I just want to clarify that the last

sentence of the first paragraph under Roman III -- this is the sentence we reviewed before with "navigate" and "demands." "Based on multiple readouts of these meetings" -- and "these meetings" refer to the meetings on July 26th?

A Yes.

Q -- "Ambassadors Volker and Sondland reportedly provided advice to the Ukrainian leadership about how to 'navigate' the demands that the President had made."

But on July 26th, you were not aware the President had any demands. Is that correct?

A Well, I think we were aware at that point that the President wanted -- I think this was still in the vanilla corruption part of the continuum. Because, again, we didn't get a transcript of the actual call until, I think, September.

Q Right.

A So this whole notion of investigating the Bidens I don't believe would've come up in that meeting because we weren't aware of it.

Q Okay. So, during that meeting, I mean, if I understand your testimony, the statement didn't come up and --

A I don't remember it coming up.

Q Okay.

A Didn't flag it for me.

Q And then just flipping back to page 7, the first bullet point: "that State Department officials, including [yourself and] Ambassador Volker, had spoken with Mr. Giuliani in an attempt to 'contain the damage.'"

I mean, none of your communications with Mr. Giuliani were trying to contain any damage, because you didn't know any damage had occurred. Is that correct?

A Well, as I said, my conversations -- because they're lumping Volker and me together -- my conversations with Giuliani really centered around negotiating this press statement.

Q Okay.

A If you want to call that containing the damage, I guess you could, but I don't see it as that.

Q Yeah. I don't understand how that could be containing the damage.

The next sentence: "During this same timeframe, multiple U.S. officials told me that the Ukrainian leadership was led to believe that a meeting or phone call between the President and President Zelensky would depend on whether Zelensky showed willingness to 'play ball.'"

Now, as far as you know, the July call was scheduled without any preconditions, right?

A Ultimately, yes.

Q The company Burisma has been the subject of a

number of investigations in Ukraine over the years. You're aware of that, right?

A I am now.

Q And to the extent Ukrainians are investigating other Ukrainians for wrongdoing in the company of Burisma, that would be perfectly acceptable, correct?

A Presumably.

Q Okay. Now, you're aware that Hunter Biden was asked to serve on the board of Burisma, correct?

A Based on press accounts, yes.

Q Yeah. Do you know whether Mr. Biden has any corporate governance experience?

A I don't.

Q Okay. And, you know, is it conceivable that Ukrainians could have decided to place Mr. Biden on the board because they wanted to curry favor with the U.S.?

A Conceivable.

Q Okay. And if they did and if the decision to place him on the board was improper and the Ukrainians found evidence of that, wouldn't it be fair that they would investigate that?

A Are you asking for my opinion?

Q Well, it's just, if there was wrongdoing associated with placing Hunter Biden on the board, wouldn't that be something worth investigating?

A Seems to be.

Q Okay.

I'm going to ask you a very odd fact that came up in another interview. I just want to get your reaction to it. Have you ever encouraged Romanians to show up at the White House without an appointment?

A No.

Q Okay. If someone were to suggest that, would you have any idea what the basis for that was?

A Well, one of the things that I wound up doing was helping bilateral ambassadors -- what do you call it? -- advocate for meetings of their country's leaders. So, occasionally, I would get a phone call from a bilateral ambassador and say, "Our President would like to meet with President Trump. I've had a request in for months. Could you help? Could you help push?

Q Now, when you --

A So that's the context in which I would join with my bilateral colleague and call someone at the White House and say, I think this is very important that we get the President of fill-in-the-blank EU country in to see President Trump.

But have I ever said, you just show up at the White House without an appointment?

Q Yes.

A No. No.

Q And by bilateral ambassador, you mean the U.S. ambassador?

A The U.S. ambassador to the particular country.

Q Like another State Department employee.

A Correct.

Q Okay.

And you can't just show up to the White House and get in, right?

A Correct.

Q You've got to have a meeting. And before the meeting, you've got to do certain things, correct?

A That's right.

Q Okay.

Did anyone in the National Security Council ever express concern to you that you were using an unsecure mobile device in your discussions with other international leaders?

A Never.

Q President Zelensky's inauguration was scheduled relatively quickly. Is that fair to say?

A I think that's right.

Q A matter of days, even?

A Yeah, I think the date was sort of floating, and they nailed it down somehow.

Q And the U.S. delegation, in advance of the trip, was in flux?

A Correct.

Q And at one point, it's been related to us, that Vice President Pence was considering going? Is that something you --

A I had heard that, yes.

Q Okay. And then, as it turned out, he was unable to go. Do you know why?

A I don't.

Q Do you know if his decision not to attend was related to any of the things we've been discussing today, such as the Burisma matter, the 2016 --

A I don't know why he didn't go.

Q Okay. So there's no reason -- you have no evidence to suggest that Vice President Pence's participation in the inaugural was withheld from Ukraine as an admonishment for not playing ball or something of that sort?

A I don't remember anything to that effect.

Q Okay.

MR. CASTOR: Mr. Zeldin.

MR. ZELDIN: I'm picking up where my colleague was just asking you some additional questions about Burisma. Do you know why Burisma and -- do you know whose Zlochevsky is?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Who?

MR. ZELDIN: Zlochevsky.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. ZELDIN: Do you know why -- so Zlochevsky was an oligarch with ownership stake in Burisma. Do you know why Burisma and Zlochevsky were under investigation for corruption in the Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do not.

MR. ZELDIN: But you are aware that Hunter Biden was hired for a paid position on the board of directors?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on press accounts, recent press accounts, yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Those press accounts, did they indicate that Hunter Biden was getting paid at least $50,000 per month?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I recall a figure close to that, yeah.

MR. ZELDIN: Did any of those press accounts indicate that he had no energy experience or Ukraine experience?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Are you aware that Vice President Joe Biden went to Ukraine in 2016 and successfully got the prosecutor general, the state prosecutor, fired?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on press accounts.

MR. ZELDIN: The name of that state prosecutor, Viktor Shokin.

Are you aware, based on those press accounts, that the Vice President threatened Ukraine with the loss of $1 billion

if they didn't immediately fire that state prosecutor?

[5:50 p.m.]

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on recent press accounts, yes.

MR. ZELDIN: Is it fair that there's a lot about Burisma, Zlochevsky, Hunter Biden and Joe Biden that you don't know about?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ZELDIN: Do you have a problem with the Vice President's son being paid $50,000 a month in Ukraine?

THE CHAIRMAN: We're getting very far afield if we're asking the Ambassador's opinion on what someone should be paid to serve on a board.

MR. ZELDIN: But you have asked for his opinion on a lot of things related to this, and I'm going to --

THE CHAIRMAN: You know, I don't think I have. The Ambassador can venture an opinion on this, but --

MR. ZELDIN: Well, he has been asked many questions about his assessment of whether it was right or wrong. So we are going to get into just what basis of information he has --

THE CHAIRMAN: We're talking about diplomatic efforts and shadow foreign policy, but I'll let the witness answer. It just seems an odd opinion question to be asking of this witness.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I have no opinion.

MR. ZELDIN: Do you believe that it would be appropriate for the son of the Vice President to be paid $50,000 a month from an entity in one of the countries in your portfolio, run by an oligarch under corruption, and that person is -- has no energy experience or no Ukraine experience? You don't have any opinion? You have no problem with that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Congressman, I can't speculate as to why they hired him or what they paid him. That wouldn't be right on my part to speculate.

MR. ZELDIN: Do you believe that there would be any conflict of interest for the Vice President to be having the -- let me backtrack a moment.

Are you aware that Viktor Shokin, that state prosecutor, had an open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky at the time that he made that threat?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only through recent press accounts.

MR. ZELDIN: And do you have any -- do you see any issue with the Vice President issuing that threat if his son is being paid $50,000 a month from that entity?

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could just state for the record, I think the evidence we've received thus far indicated there was no open investigation. You can posit an allegation, but that's not been the --

MR. MEADOWS: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I

don't mind you opining on your 45 minutes. And this is a deposition, and unless you want us opining on your 45 minutes, let's leave it to the questions and answers. He's got three capable counselors there that I'm sure are paid far more than you and I are paid to advise him on what he should and should not answer.

THE CHAIRMAN: The objection, if we were in court, would be facts not in evidence. And --

MR. MEADOWS: But the objections if we were in court would be on you leading the witness over and over and over again.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair --

MR. NOBLE: That's admissible in court.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair --

MR. ZELDIN: By the way, the question was, are you aware that there was an open case?

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's fair to this witness to ask him if he is aware of facts which are not, in fact, facts. If you want to say, are you aware that there is an allegation, that's fine.

MR. MEADOWS: Well, Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, you have indicated facts regarding a 2020 campaign investigation that are not facts, they're merely your opinion. So if we want to get in this back-and-forth, I'm more than willing to get into a colloquy with you with the

facts, because the facts are on my side.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would just caution the witness facts represented by members may not actually be facts, but you are free to answer their questions.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't express an opinion on Mr. Biden's employment.

MR. ZELDIN: Are you aware -- do you know if Viktor Shokin had an open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky at the time that Vice President Biden threatened Ukraine with the loss of $1 billion?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware. Again, all of my awareness comes from recent press reports.

MR. MEADOWS: So, Mr. Ambassador, let me jump in. I don't want you answering to facts that are not facts. I want to make that clear for the record. I also don't want you to give opinion on things that you're not an expert on.

And I can tell that some of your reluctance with my colleague is that you don't want to weigh in. And so, as much as we might want you to weigh in, and as much as the other side might want you to weigh in on facts that are not necessarily facts, I want you to stick to that. Can I interject?

Here is one area that I do believe that there -- we are conflating two different things. We're conflating foreign aid and javelins at times. Would you agree with that? That

foreign aid, the foreign aid that was withheld was not actually withholding javelin defense items. Are you aware of any conversation where javelins were being withheld?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My knowledge of the aid package is very limited. Again, my focus -- it sounds very narrow, but you have a full-time bilateral Ambassador who would deal with those issues. That was Ambassador Taylor and prior to that, Ambassador Yovanovitch. That is right in the center lane of their portfolio. Then on top of that, which is unusual, you have layered over that a Special Envoy, whose sole focus is to oversee the Ukraine portfolio.

My role in this was to use whatever influence I had at the NSC and the White House to help advocate for a meeting. I did not get into the peculiarities --

MR. MEADOWS: And that advocation for the meeting, your advocating for that meeting was in the sole interest, best interest of the United States and our national security. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

MR. MEADOWS: 100 percent?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: 100 percent.

MR. MEADOWS: Not 99, 100 percent in the best interest of our country. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In my view, yes.

MR. MEADOWS: Okay. And so, in advocating for this

meeting, in advocating to make sure that the new President Zelensky was, indeed, set on a new path, you were very encouraged that he was serious about addressing corruption. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

MR. MEADOWS: Because my colleague was talking about Mr. Shokin, and I guess his reputation was one that he was not serious about really rooting out corruption. Had you heard that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, based on recent press reports.

MR. MEADOWS: Had you heard about the special prosecutor that replaced him, that he was not serious about rooting out corruption?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Contemporarily, yes.

MR. MEADOWS: So both of those individuals were not serious. So we were taking a leap of faith, a leap of faith that this new government was going to get rid of corruption, which was contrary to all history that we know about with Ukraine. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You can always dream.

MR. MEADOWS: All right, we can always dream. Would you agree that the European Union, prior to May of 2019, shared a similar view with President Donald Trump that corruption was a way of life in the Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They were concerned about corruption, I think it's fair to say.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. And had any of the European Union raised corruption issues about the Ukraine with you in your role, in your official role as Ambassador for the EU?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes. In fact, the official that traveled with me to Odessa, who was the Secretary General of the EU, raised it himself with President Poroshenko at our bilateral meeting.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. So you're saying that people outside of this administration raised with the previous President their concern about corruption. Whether or not it had anything to do with any individual, they were just generally concerned about corruption. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Corruption per se, yes.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. I can yield back.

MR. ZELDIN: If the President of the United States has a problem with the former Vice President of the United States' son being paid $50,000 a month with no energy experience and no Ukraine experience, if the President of the United States has a problem with the Vice President running point for the Obama administration and threatening to withhold $1 billion of U.S. aid if the State prosecutor isn't fired, and if the President of the United States is aware that there was an investigation into the entity that was paying Hunter Biden

$50,000 a month, and Zlochevsky who runs that, and if the President of the United States believes that there was an open investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky at the time of Vice President Biden's threat, if the President of the United States has a problem with all of this, is that a reasonable position, is that an acceptable position for the President of the United States to want to look into that further?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I can't express an opinion on that. I don't know legally if the President has the right to do that. Again, I'm not a lawyer. I think that's really between the President and his -- you know, the electorate, as to whether the voters think that that's proper or not. I don't know.

MR. ZELDIN: But earlier on, you were testifying to a question worded differently, where you were saying that it would be inappropriate to ask the Ukrainian Government to conduct an investigation into a 2020 political rival, correct? Did you say something to that effect earlier?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I believe I did, yes.

MR. ZELDIN: But you're not willing to explain that any further beyond that, given all of -- of what the President may believe when making that -- when making that request. Does it matter what the facts are to you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, the facts are critical, and I don't know all the underlying facts. And I'm really not in

the business of providing an opinion on this hypothetical as to whether it was proper or improper. I do think it was improper on the future election.

MR. ZELDIN: Did you feel pressured earlier in today's deposition to answer that it was improper to ask, based on the fact that you don't have all the facts?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think I felt unduly pressured at this deposition at all.

MR. ZELDIN: You didn't feel unduly pressured to answer that question without your facts, but you feel like you shouldn't answer my question because you don't have your facts? It's the same exact issue.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Tell me again your question.

MR. ZELDIN: So the President of the United States, if the President of the United States believes that Hunter Biden, Vice President Joe Biden's son, is getting paid $50,000 a month from this foreign company run by a foreign oligarch, that there is a corruption investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky; if the President of the United States believes that Vice President Joe Biden threatened Ukraine with the loss of $1 billion, if they didn't immediately fire the state prosecutor who was the state prosecutor who had an investigation into Burisma and Zlochevsky; if the President believes all of these different things, if the President believes that Burisma, Zlochevsky, Hunter Biden and Joe Biden

shouldn't be immune from scrutiny just because Joe Biden is running for President; if the President was to believe that if it's not illegal then it should be; if the President believes that U.S. aid to Ukraine should be spent as effectively as possible; if the President has longstanding issues with corruption in Ukraine, if the President believes all of these things, would it be okay for the President to want to look into this further?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: As I said, I'm not a lawyer. If it's legal for him to do so, then I assume it would be okay. If it's illegal for him to do so, then I assume it would be wrong. That's the best answer I can give you. It's really a question of law.

MR. ZELDIN: So we're talking about an earlier question you were asked and you answered one way, and another question I just asked that you're answering the opposite way. One question was worded the way that I just worded the question I just asked you, and you gave what seemed to be a candid answer. One of my colleagues earlier asked you if it would be appropriate to ask Ukraine to conduct an investigation into a political rival, and you answered a different way.

So I'm trying to understand two completely different answers to what is the same exact situation, a request by the President of the United States to Ukraine to look into a case involving an entity that was under investigation for

corruption owned by an oligarch under investigation for corruption, and the President of the United States has an issue with the entire setup and he makes the request.

So you've been asked the question on what is the same exact issue two different ways, but you're giving two totally different answers. And we need to -- I believe it would be helpful if we can better understand why it's two totally different answers to what is the same exact request.

MR. LUSKIN: With all respect, Congressman, we've now been here for eight and a half hours and Ambassador Sondland has not declined to answer a single question posed by any member or any counsel member. You've asked this question now three different times. I know you're unhappy with his answer, but if we stay until 7:30 he's not going to change his answer.

MR. ZELDIN: So you might have misunderstood my answer, Counselor, but I had no issue at all with what Ambassador Sondland just said. My issue is with his answer earlier today that was a different answer to what was a different version of the same exact question, and I'm giving the Ambassador an opportunity, if he would like to, if he would like to, help us better understand why there were two different answers to those two questions.

MR. LUSKIN: And I think, as he's made clear, he stands by his testimony today, by his answers to your questions and

by his answers to the questions by the majority earlier. And I think it's obviously the task of this committee if you perceive there to be any differences between those answers to reconcile those differences. But more questions I don't think are going to assist you any further. I think you've asked it about as many times as you can, and he's given you his best shot at an answer.

MR. ROY: Do you have something to add? No?

Ambassador, in your statement you provided, you said: "First, I knew that a public embrace of anticorruption reforms by Ukraine was one of the preconditions for securing a White House meeting with President Zelensky."

Do you stand by that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do.

MR. ROY: My view was and has always been that such Western reforms are consistent with U.S. support for rule of law in Ukraine, going back decades, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, right, you agree?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yes, I do.

MR. ROY: Nothing about that request raised any red flags for me, Ambassador Volker, or Ambassador Taylor.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROY: A few moments ago, though, you made a statement and I just want to make sure -- I might have misheard, but you made a statement along the lines of you

thought that there should be no preconditions for a meeting, and that there should have been a meeting immediately after the inauguration?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, as a policy matter, obviously, if my goal was to get the two Presidents together as quickly as possible following the inauguration, a meeting with no preconditions would have been a lot easier to handle.

MR. ROY: Right. But do you see my -- I mean, my question here is just -- I mean, you can have a policy debate about that, right? And I get -- and we had an exchange earlier about your goals and trying to, you know, get the things we want to get accomplished in Ukraine. We talked about Secretary Perry.

My question here, though, is just you have stated fairly affirmatively nothing about that request raised any red flags for you. So, just to be clear, you don't see a problem with having preconditions. Just to exercise your goal of getting a meeting as soon as humanly possible, that would have been your preference.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct. In other words, from a policy matter, there was nothing wrong with --

MR. ROY: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- clear and straightforward preconditions that were lawful preconditions. Nothing wrong with that. My preference would have been no preconditions.

MR. ROY: Right, and that's fine. But, in other words, to carry out your objective, which is to have a meeting.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. ROY: But preconditions might be perfectly acceptable?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Totally.

MR. ROY: Okay. The other question I have is, if the United States Government believes, if we have reason to believe, the President down through law enforcement or otherwise and our intelligence agencies, we have reason to believe that any country in the world had any interference with our system of elections or otherwise, would that not be a basis for our government to choose to withhold funds, or to otherwise make decisions about how we handle aid and so forth, any country, hypothetically speaking, speaking as an Ambassador, would that not be a reason for a country to kind of think about how they handle aid?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think it would create concern on our part, yes.

MR. ROY: Okay.

MR. MEADOWS: Ambassador, I'm going to go back to one thing just to make sure that we're clear. We talked about the letter earlier today, the letter that surprised you I think was your words. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but the letter from the President that said, we can

have this meeting, and you were surprised by it, based on the initial meeting in the Oval Office. Is that correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That is correct.

MR. MEADOWS: And so once you had this letter that was unconditioned in terms of meeting with President Zelensky, would you characterize that as a letter that had no conditions to it, in terms of a meeting with President Zelensky?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Other than scheduling.

MR. MEADOWS: Other than scheduling. Did you ever hear from Secretary Pompeo that the President really didn't mean that letter and that you shouldn't take the letter at face value, that the only problem was a scheduling problem?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. MEADOWS: Did you ever hear from President Trump that he really didn't mean what he said in the letter, that it was -- the only precondition was a scheduling problem?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No.

MR. MEADOWS: Did you hear from anyone in authority that the President really didn't mean what he said in that letter and that he was -- that there was any problem other than scheduling and that you shouldn't believe what that letter said?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did not hear that, to the best of my recollection.

MR. MEADOWS: All right. And I appreciate you clarifying that and helping me understand that better, and I will yield back to my colleagues.

MR. CASTOR: We yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would suggest, rather than breaking, because we're nearing the end that we just motor on through. Is that okay, Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: How much longer?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm going to go to our members and then our staff has a few cleanup questions, and then we're done if they're done. So, hopefully, very soon.

MR. LUSKIN: Good. Let's motor through, Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Malinowski.

MR. CASTOR: We might have a followup question or two.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ambassador, for your patience and diligence in answering these questions. And let me just say I personally very much appreciate what you were trying to accomplish throughout this difficult period in getting the two Presidents together to get our relationship with Ukraine back on track, something we are all committed to in a bipartisan way.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Congressman.

MR. MALINOWSKI: I wanted to -- my first question relates to your phone call to the President on, I believe,

September 9th, when you asked him, you said, what do you want from the Ukrainians, and you said that the President said that he wanted nothing. He repeated that there was no quid pro quo.

But then you told us at a later point that the President then added, I want Zelensky -- I just want Zelensky to do what he ran on. Is that essentially correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In so many words, yes.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Okay. So even in that conversation in which he said there was no -- that he wanted nothing, no quid pro quo, he did actually want something. He wanted Zelensky to do something consistent with what he ran on. That's correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: If you consider that a quid pro quo, then --

MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, how did you -- what did you understand he meant by "I want Zelensky to do what he ran on"?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Again, I didn't have the time or opportunity to question him. He -- as I stated in my opening statement, he was in a very bad mood and it was a very short call. I don't want to characterize him as hanging up on me, but it was close to that.

MR. MALINOWSKI: But then in the text message that you sent reporting on that conversation, you said: "The

President is trying to evaluate whether Ukraine is truly going to adopt the transparency and reforms that President Zelensky promised."

So I think it suggests that you thought he was referring, again, to the corruption issue.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I thought it was -- based, again, on the short call, it was my interpretation of what the President was trying to tell me. I didn't have the opportunity to ask followup questions. He didn't want to talk.

MR. MALINOWSKI: So your assumption was that this was basically the same thing that had been communicated again and again. And, of course, corruption by September 9th, you know, you realize that that entails those two specific asks related to 2016 and Burisma?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, no. I had realized that it entailed those two specific asks, based on anecdotal evidence from a lot of other people. I had never heard it from the President. That's why I called the President.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, you did hear from the President at one point his interest in 2016, though, you said.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I heard on the 23rd that he wanted -- that Ukraine was trying to take him down. That was what I heard --

MR. MALINOWSKI: Got it.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- on the 23rd.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Second issue: You told us that you were trying to figure out why the aid was cut off when you learned that that was, in fact, true, and that nobody involved in the Ukraine file seemed to know why the aid was cut off.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They all seemed to have different reasons. No one could give me a clear answer saying, this is our current policy.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Isn't that a bit odd that nobody involved in making and implementing policy towards this important country knew why aid had been cut off to that country?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It's extremely odd.

MR. MALINOWSKI: One of the theories, one of the potential reasons that was stated was that the Europeans were not doing enough to help Ukraine, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was one reason.

MR. MALINOWSKI: You're our Ambassador to the EU. After the aid was cut, did anyone ever ask you, in your formal role as our representative to the EU, to go to the Europeans and to ask them to do more to help Ukraine as a way of getting that aid unfrozen?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They did not.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Are you aware that any other State

Department official was asked to deliver this message to the Europeans?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm not aware.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Thank you.

The third issue, it's been -- we've gone back and forth on the general practice of conditioning U.S. assistance around the world, and certainly, I think we would all acknowledge it's very commonly done. We condition all kinds of things on what we want from other countries. My colleagues may know I used to be the Assistant Secretary for DRL, for the Democracy Human Rights Bureau, and I would have been on your case to condition aid in many cases on human rights and corruption issues.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You wouldn't have needed to.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Well, thank you. But, in that context, are you aware that the State Department, through all this time, has had a comprehensive set of asks to the Ukrainian Government with regard to what it should do to improve its record on corruption?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Anecdotally, yes. I've never seen a formal list, though.

MR. MALINOWSKI: So you haven't familiarized yourself with what we have been asking the Ukrainians to do?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. That is exactly in the bilateral Ambassador's center lane.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Got it.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They would not be happy if I interfered in that.

MR. MALINOWSKI: But you've heard conversations -- so would it be -- would it sound right to you to hear that we were asking them to strengthen the prosecutor's office, to clean up corruption in the defense sector, you know, defense procurement, there was corruption there, that we wanted them to do more prosecutions of oligarchs and, you know, high-level corrupt individuals, such things as that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: None of that would surprise me.

MR. MALINOWSKI: And were any of those things in, in your experience, ever linked to the aid or the desire of the Ukrainians to have a meeting with the President?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Only in the sense of the rubric of general corruption, when we were at that part of the continuum.

MR. MALINOWSKI: But those things weren't specifically presented to the Ukrainians as needing to be addressed?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not by me.

MR. MALINOWSKI: By anybody, to your knowledge?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not to my knowledge, but I don't know.

MR. MALINOWSKI: And presumably, if we wanted a country to do something on corruption to get a benefit from us, we

would want to tell them what to do specifically, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Presumably.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Presumably, okay. So ultimately, again, it just came down to Burisma and 2016. And with regard to that, it all came to a head, you testified, with the negotiation, attempted negotiation of a press statement in which they were asked, you know, through Rudy Giuliani, to reference those specific things.

With regard to the reference to 2016 that was desired from the Ukrainians, was that ever framed -- in terms of Ukraine specifically, was that ever framed in terms of Ukraine cooperating with an ongoing Department of Justice investigation?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall that. It may have been, but I don't recall that wording.

MR. MALINOWSKI: So the draft press statement -- and I think we heard a draft -- as I recall it, it had the Ukrainians say that they would investigate these issues. It didn't refer to cooperating with the Attorney General or working through an MLAT to help DOJ conduct its own investigation into those issues.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. All of the anecdotal information through Ambassador Volker from presumably Mr. Giuliani had to do with the Ukrainians conducting their own investigations.

MR. MALINOWSKI: Understood. Well, thank you.

And I yield back.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Representative Hill.

MS. HILL: Thank you. Good to see you. I met you at the Speaker's delegation.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Right. Nice to see you again.

MS. HILL: Thank you for this. This is a lot of patience and I know this is a marathon.

So my questions are really just kind of -- I want to center on what the -- when you're talking about your continuum, you sort of -- you clarified four phases. The third is when you know that we're discussing Burisma and the 2016 supposed intervention, right, or interference in the election, right? Is that what you would consider kind of three of four phases?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That's right.

MS. HILL: Okay. So during August, really around August 9th on is when it seems to escalate, based on the text messages that I've seen. And on August 9th, I just, again, wanted to clarify a few things. It looks like you had the initial conversation with where Kurt Volker wanted to -- he had a chat with Yermak and he wanted to get on the phone to talk about what we needed to advise him on with Giuliani, right?

So you said you don't remember a lot of the details of the call with Giuliani, but then later in the day, you said specifically that to avoid misunderstandings, it might be helpful to ask Andrey for a draft statement.

So it seems like -- and then when you were talking about that earlier, you said that you were concerned that whatever Ukraine produced wouldn't be good enough for what apparently earlier in the day, I would assume, Giuliani had said. Does that sound right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think what I said was that this was the point where we went from a draft statement that was just going to be a press statement, a written statement, to some type of television interview or television broadcast.

And I was asking that whatever he was proposing to say would be put down on paper ahead of time so that we wouldn't put Zelensky in a position of where he does this on television and it's not good enough.

MS. HILL: Got it, okay. So then on the next day, you were forwarded something from Volker that was conversation from Yermak saying: Hi, Kurt, please let me know when you can talk. I think it's possible to make this declaration and mention all of these things which we discussed yesterday, but it would be logic to do after we receive confirmation of date.

So it sounds like they are getting -- Ukraine might be

getting frustrated and wanting to nail down a date before they put anything out publicly. Does that sound right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That sounds right.

MS. HILL: And what is -- given kind of what I saw when we went on the trip, the importance of Ukraine and Russia and our relationship with the EU, did that escalate the sense of urgency for you to kind of get this meeting on the books, to really move things forward with -- if Ukraine is getting more frustrated, does that -- did that raise any flags for you? Did that make you want to move?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I mean, we were jerking Ukraine around, and I didn't like it.

MS. HILL: Okay. What do you mean by that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean we were -- we were continually putting new conditions on a meeting which should have occurred, because they had already issued an unconditional invitation.

MS. HILL: Got it, okay. And at that point, it looks like on the same date, Yermak says that -- he specifically states that they will announce the upcoming visit once there's a date locked in for the meeting and outlining the vision for the reboot of the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, including, among other things, Burisma and the election meddling investigations.

MS. HILL: So at that stage, on August 10th, you knew about Burisma and the meddling, the supposed meddling, that that was the condition that the White House wanted, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Presumably, that's when we got to that phase of the continuum.

MS. HILL: Through Giuliani, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MS. HILL: That was how it was indicated? Okay.

So if you continue on, then it gets to -- it looks like there's a shift in who is kind of leading things, in my opinion, on the text messages. And I'm not sure if this is right, but, given escalation, I would assume it might be, where suddenly it looks like Kurt Volker sends something to you, the statement -- this is on the text messages from August 13th.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Can you give me a page?

MS. HILL: I'm not looking at something with the same page numbers as you, so maybe --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: August 13th?

MS. HILL: August 13th at 10:26 in the morning.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh.

MR. LUSKIN: Which text chain?

MS. HILL: Ambassador -- let's see. Yeah, it was Volker and Sondland. Yeah. So it looks like it was just you and Sondland -- I mean you and Volker.

Okay. Well, either way, he sends the statement to you that to me seems --

MR. LUSKIN: Hold on. Give us 1 second.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: One second. Okay. Okay, what date, again?

MS. HILL: August 13th.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: At what time?

MS. HILL: At 10:26 a.m.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Wait a minute. This is all -- this is Yermak and me on page 23. It's the wrong page. Yermak and Volker and me.

MS. HILL: What I'm looking at is a longer message from Kurt Volker that says "special attention" --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, okay, I've got that. That's the last text. Got it.

MS. HILL: Okay. And so it's a long statement, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yep.

MS. HILL: And so it looks to me like he might be sending that to you for approval. Does that sound right? Because you say afterwards: "Perfect, let's send to Andrey after our call."

THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just interrupt, Representative Hill? And I don't know if you were here at the time, but we went through all these text messages. If you still need further clarification, but --

MS. HILL: Yes. It was mainly the approval part that I wanted to clarify, because that's where it seems to me like things are starting to shift where you're taking more of a lead role than Volker. And I just wanted to know if you had any -- if this was related to your concerns perhaps escalating.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm trying to find the followup where you say I said "perfect."

Oh, okay, got it, got it, got it. Okay.

MS. HILL: I'm not going to grill you on the specifics of those anyway.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I mean, again, this was -- this was not a question of who was or wasn't in charge. This was sort of a collaborative effort. I think what we were trying to do here was to get something on paper that we could tentatively say, yeah, that sounds like something Giuliani would be okay with, and Yermak could say, yeah, I think Zelensky would be okay with it.

And then -- again, I'm speculating -- once we got to some language, we would send the language off to our respective principals and figure out if we had a statement we could agree on. Not unlike negotiating a lot of different statements.

MS. HILL: Okay. And, sorry, because the reason I was asking is that by the 17th you were having direct

conversations with Yermak, whereas it looked more previously like Volker was talking with Yermak and it was coming to you.

So I was wondering if that was kind of -- that might be the crisis mitigation that we were talking about when Ukraine is getting more upset, when you're having to kind of step in and take more of a leadership role.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I will take the compliment, but I don't think that that really was the case. I think this was just circumstantial. Sometimes Yermak could reach me. Sometimes he could reach Volker. Sometimes Volker was at the McCain Institute, because he wasn't working full time. He had other duties. So I think it was catch as catch can.

MS. HILL: So by the time you had the visit -- or the President canceled the trip to Poland and you went, right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I did.

MS. HILL: You met with Zelensky. And --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The Vice President met with Zelensky. I sat in on the meeting.

MS. HILL: Okay, got it. What was your impression by then? This was the escalation. This was the -- to me, this is kind of the critical mass moment where it's all coming to a head. How was it with Zelensky at that point?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, I think Zelensky, you know, in my opinion, put on a good game face. I think he was disappointed, because I think he thought this was going to be

his first meeting with President Trump. I think he understood the hurricane was beyond President Trump's control. You know, he was being gracious, but I think he would have preferred to meet with the President of the United States then the Vice President of the United States. That's just normal.

MS. HILL: Do you feel like at this point they felt -- Ukraine felt more pressure to kind of accommodate those requests?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if they felt more pressure. I don't think this was a case of turning up the pressure. I think this was circumstantial. And then, again, we tried to figure out when the next opportunity would be for him to meet with the President, which turned out to be at the UNGA.

MS. HILL: Okay. And then the last thing and I'll stop is that you have -- on September 8th, it says -- these are the final text messages that I'm referring to. It's one between you, Taylor, and Volker on September 8th at 11:20 a.m.

MR. LUSKIN: And, again, we're going to have to try and find it.

MS. HILL: I know. I'm sorry.

MR. NOBLE: 53.

MR. LUSKIN: Thank you. Okay, go ahead

MS. HILL: So you say that you have multiple conversations with Zelensky and POTUS at this point, but by now you're aware that the aid had been withheld, right? Yes, that happened on August 29th.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think I was aware that the aid had been withheld in July when Taylor sent me a text to the effect that I had just got off of a video conference and someone said something about a hold on the aid. I think that's when I became --

MS. HILL: In July?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah, in July. But I didn't have any reason to know why it was being withheld.

MS. HILL: Got it, okay, because I saw the one from Yermak on August 29th, so --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think the Ukrainians knew it was being withheld back in July.

MS. HILL: Only in August.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah.

MS. HILL: So you knew in July that the aid was being withheld?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I knew what Taylor told me.

MS. HILL: Okay. And so by September 8th, you said: Guys, multiple conversations with Zelensky and POTUS, let's talk. Right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Which time?

MS. HILL: That was the 11:20 a.m.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I don't recall. I see it. I don't recall the -- I don't recall the conversations.

MS. HILL: You don't recall the conversations with Zelensky and --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't -- I don't recall the conversations. I'd need more refreshment to recall the conversations.

MS. HILL: Okay. Well, then that same day in that same text message chain, Bill Taylor says: "Gordon and I just spoke. I can brief you" -- I'm assuming this is to Volker -- "I can brief you if you and Gordon didn't connect." Does that refresh your memory at all?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Yeah. I mean, I obviously must have relayed to Bill Taylor what I talked about, but I don't remember what it is.

MS. HILL: Okay. So there's nothing right around this time of September 8th or 9th where you feel like -- is this when the red flag is really hitting for you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: You know, this is just before I believe that -- this is just before I got the text from Taylor talking about that everything's connected. I believe that's -- this is one day before I got that text.

MS. HILL: Okay. And then --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And that was the text that said, I

hope this isn't being, you know, withheld for political reasons, or something to that effect.

MS. HILL: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And that's when I made the phone call to --

MS. HILL: The President.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: -- the President, yeah.

MS. HILL: But that night, on the 8th, you don't recall what you and Taylor were talking about or what you and Volker were talking about?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know if it may have led up to that text. He may have said something to warn, that I'm feeling this, but then I got the text on the 9th, and then I knew conclusively that he was concerned.

MS. HILL: But on the 8th is when you said that there were multiple conversations with Zelensky and POTUS. What do you think that was?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know, because I don't think I would have talked to POTUS the day before I talked to him again. I don't think I talked to him twice in 2 days.

MS. HILL: So you don't know what you might have been referring to there?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No, I don't.

MS. HILL: Okay. Okay, thank you.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you. Sorry.

THE CHAIRMAN: I promise you're almost at the end. I just have a couple questions, my staff has a couple of cleanup questions.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Great.

THE CHAIRMAN: And then, unless Mr. Swalwell has a burning question, I think we're done on our side.

MR. CASTOR: And I have one or two.

THE CHAIRMAN: I wanted to ask you, at the press conference today with Chief of Staff Mulvaney, he was asked: "So he," meaning the President, "was never realistically entertaining a meeting with President Zelensky?"

And Mr. Mulvaney's answer was: "I mean, I -- we -- we get asked by foreign leaders all the time to either come visit their country or to have them come visit here, and we go -- try to be courteous and say yes. And some of them we're able to accommodate and some of them we are not, but I do not remember -- excuse me, I'm going to answer her question -- that I don't remember serious conversation about setting up an actual meeting. There were no dates discussed. There was not -- I -- I saw that as one of the typical pleasantries that we have, and I don't think it was dangling a -- a meeting or anything like that."

I take it, Ambassador, that was not your understanding of the situation when that letter went out?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not at all.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Noble.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Ambassador, going back to September 1st, the meetings in Warsaw, the bilat between Vice President Pence and President Zelensky.

A Yes.

Q So this was after the July 25th call between President Trump and President Zelensky, correct?

A What was the Warsaw date?

Q September 1st.

A Yes.

Q And it's also after the Politico article made public that the U.S. had frozen the aid to Ukraine on August 28th.

A I think that's right.

Q A few days later after that, right?

A Yeah.

Q Do you recall any conversation between Vice President Pence and President Zelensky about the frozen aid or the White House visit?

A I sat in, as I said, I sat in on a bilat with about 20 people, at least, on each side, so maybe 30 or 40 people total. And I'm sure there were contemporaneous notes taken of the meeting. And as I also testified, I don't believe there was a private pull-aside. I think it was one of these

large bilats.

And I don't -- I don't remember if President Zelensky did one of his quips like, "When am I going to get my date?" which he did when he and the President had their bilat in New York. He may have done that. He's been -- he was a little snarky about it, because it had been withheld for so long. And this is new news to me about Chief of Staff Mulvaney.

As far as the aid is concerned, I don't remember him bringing it up, at least in the big bilat. Now, again, I don't know if he and Vice President Pence had a private conversation afterwards, but I don't recall.

Q So you don't recall Vice President Pence saying something to the effect that the U.S. was not going to lift the freeze at that time to President Zelensky?

A I don't -- again, he may have done -- I don't remember it. I honestly don't.

Q Do you know whether Vice President Pence had been briefed or had read the transcript of the July 25th call at that point?

A I don't know. I never asked him.

Q And then the next day, September 2nd, I believe you said Secretary Pompeo traveled to Brussels and you had meetings with Secretary Pompeo.

A Correct.

Q So that's the day after you had that text message

exchange with Ambassador Taylor where he said or asked: "Are we now saying that security assistance and White House meeting are conditioned on investigations?"

Did you discuss Ambassador Taylor's concerns with Secretary Pompeo about the linkage?

A No. And the reason I didn't was we were so consumed with the meetings, which were very fragile, getting those meetings scheduled, and then potentially losing them after President Trump decided not to travel to Warsaw, because we were all going to travel together, that I was totally focused on the EU meetings. And I didn't discuss anything with Secretary Pompeo that I can recall other than the EU meetings with the four leaders.

Q Did you ever discuss with Secretary Pompeo the linkage between security assistance, White House meeting, and the investigations?

A I think the only thing I did was encourage Ambassador Taylor to deal with it and to call Secretary Pompeo.

Q You never had any direct discussions with Secretary Pompeo?

A I don't recall any. I mean, I do recall I was highly focused on the four leaders when we were there. It was a very tight schedule.

Q Did you ever discuss Rudy Giuliani with Secretary

Pompeo?

A Only in general terms.

Q And what did you discuss?

A That he's involved in affairs. And Pompeo rolled his eyes and said: Yes, it's something we have to deal with.

Q What about his counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl? You said you had lots of conversations with Mr. Brechbuhl?

A On and off, yes.

Q Did you discuss the linkage between the security assistance, the White House meeting, and the investigations with him?

A I don't believe I did, but I don't recall.

Q What about Rudy Giuliani, did you discuss Giuliani with Brechbuhl?

A I may have. Again, people usually smiled when they heard Rudy's name because he was always swirling around somewhere.

Q Yeah, but, I mean, he was causing serious issues in the U.S. relationship with Ukraine. Did you raise those concerns with --

A Listen, the State Department was fully aware of the issues, and there was very little they could do about it if the President decided he wanted his lawyer involved.

Q And does that include Secretary Pompeo and his counselor, Ulrich Brechbuhl?

A My speculation is yes, that they hit a brick wall when it came to getting rid of Mr. Giuliani.

Q I just want to ask you about whether you know of anything about a September 17th phone call between Secretary Pompeo and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister?

A Would that be with Mr. Prystaiko?

Q I believe so. You can pronounce it, I can't.

A What was the question?

Q Are you familiar with the September 17th call between the Secretary and the Foreign Minister?

A I'm aware they had a call. I don't believe I ever saw a readout.

Q So you don't know what the content --

A I don't.

Q What about a September 18th call between Vice President Pence and President Zelensky?

A Again, don't recall. Again, this was the disorganization. We weren't kept in the loop that the call was going to occur. We weren't asked to listen in. So a lot of this was catchup.

Q Okay. You've had some testimony today about the United Nations General Assembly and the meeting between President Trump and President Zelensky. Could you just describe for us kind of their interactions during UNGA?

A Yeah. I mean, it was a typical bilat where you had

a press scrum prior to the formal meeting and a lot of questions shouted. And, you know, we all know what President Trump said. It was widely reported. No pressure, it was a perfect meeting, you heard all of that. Then the press was ushered out.

And President Trump and President Zelensky had sort of a colloquy back and forth, and President Zelensky jokingly said: When am I going to get my date for the White House? I'm still -- I had my invitation, where's the date? And President Trump sort of deferred the -- you know, punted on the question, didn't answer it.

Q Is that -- are you referring to the press conference they held together on television, or was this the conversation that also occurred in private?

A I think it occurred in private as well, yeah. Private, I mean, there were 30 people in the room, probably.

Q Was there any discussion during the private session about the July 25th call or President Trump's interest in Ukraine pursuing the investigations that he discussed during that call?

A I don't recall that.

Q What about -- did they have -- were there any discussions about the investigations with any other officials on the side that President Trump had?

A I wasn't with President Trump for any other

discussions. I came into the bilat and then I left.

Q Just for the -- with President Zelensky?

A Yes.

Q What about you, did you have any discussions with other officials regarding the July 25th call?

A I don't recall, no. I don't recall having.

Q I just have some final questions about, of all things, recordkeeping.

So you say you used your personal -- or you had a dual cell phone for personal and business. Are you familiar with the Federal Records Act and its requirements for recordkeeping?

A I am.

Q So, obviously, you used WhatsApp to communicate with other U.S. officials. Did you also use WhatsApp to communicate with foreign officials?

A Yeah, it's very customary in Europe. Everyone uses WhatsApp. That's one of the only mediums that foreign leaders use in Europe.

Q Did you also use -- did you ever use personal email to communicate with foreign leaders or U.S. Government officials?

A I tried to avoid it, but when I did I also tried to copy my State email, because the State email is really hard to send attachments or forward. It's just -- it's really a

cumbersome system.

Q So did you not always follow that requirement to copy your State email?

A When I didn't, I tried to remedy the situation by moving it over. But as far as my counsel is concerned, I think I'm now in complete compliance with that act.

Is that correct?

MR. LUSKIN: That is correct.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q Did you do it within 20 days --

A I don't recall.

Q -- of when you initially sent the message or communication?

A I don't recall.

Q What did you do to comply with the recordkeeping requirements as it pertains to your WhatsApp messages?

MR. LUSKIN: They've all been forwarded to the State Department electronically.

MR. NOBLE: Did that occur within 20 days of the communication?

MR. MEADOWS: Counsel, with all due respect --

MR. SWALWELL: He's asking the question. No, no, no. Mark, he gets to ask the questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen.

MR. MEADOWS: If we're going to get into the 20 days,

Adam, let me just tell you what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Okay? And I promise you if you want --

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the gander endured 2-1/2 years of Benghazi over emails, so --

MR. MEADOWS: I'm looking for 30,000 emails, Adam, 30,000 emails.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it is appropriate to --

MR. MEADOWS: You want to talk about 20 days? Come on.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it is appropriate to ask -- excuse me.

MR. MEADOWS: It is 9 hours and now we're getting into this kind of crap, and that's what it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. I think it is appropriate to ask whether the Ambassador provided his text messages --

MR. MEADOWS: And he said yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let me finish. Contemporaneously when they were produced or only recently when this matter became under investigation.

So would you please respond, Ambassador?

MR. MEADOWS: Listen, it's under my committee. I know it. If you want to go back and forth --

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then you should want to hear the answer.

MR. MEADOWS: I want to hear it. He said they were preserved, and now we're going to try to talk about 20 days.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. His counsel said that they were in compliance now. The question is --

MR. MEADOWS: Did you have a personal server, Ambassador Sondland?

THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me, Mr. Meadows.

Ambassador, did you contemporaneously provide your WhatsApp messages to the State Department, per the requirements of the Federal Records Act, or was that done only recently upon the initiation of the investigation?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I was told that because of my phone having a dual SIM that everything wound up on the State server because one of the SIMs is my State SIM, my State email. That was not correct. And none of those texts or those WhatsApps wound up on the State server. They wound up just staying on the phone. So I did recently comply and put them on the State server.

THE CHAIRMAN: And how recently?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: In the last week or 2, I think.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BY MR. NOBLE:

Q One other question on the text messages. Did you delete any of your text messages after that exchange with Ambassador Taylor on September 9th, or your WhatsApp messages or emails?

A Did I delete any --

Q Did you delete any of your WhatsApp messages, text messages, or emails after September 9th when you had that exchange with Ambassador Taylor?

A I may have, but I don't recall. I occasionally delete texts that are personal texts. I don't recall.

Q Anything pertaining to Ukraine?

A I'd have to go back and look. I don't recall.

Q Do you know whether those were preserved?

A Everything that's there was preserved.

Q But some may have been deleted before you turned over your messages?

A Again, I don't want to swear to it, because I get a lot of texts. So --

Q I mean, do you have any specific -- I mean, so at that point, right, you're sending this email that President Trump is claiming there is no quid pro quo. You're like let's stop talking about this over text message. At that point, did you delete any of your messages?

A No, at that point I did not delete anything on that stream.

Q Well, any other stream relating to Ukraine?

A Again, I don't recall. I will get back to you if you'd like me to look into it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Swalwell.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Chairman.

Do you have a daily read book as an Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I'm sorry?

MR. SWALWELL: Do you have a daily read book? Like, you mentioned cables that come across your desk.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I get them electronically, and sometimes I get a read book, depending on where I am.

MR. SWALWELL: Do you get press clippings every day?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I get a summary.

MR. SWALWELL: Who compiles that for you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The staff.

MR. SWALWELL: Who was compiling that for you in the spring of 2019?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't recall.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay. And that would -- did those press clippings, do they relate to Ukraine as well?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't read a lot of the press clippings. I have way too much to do to sit and read. I could read press clippings all day long.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay. But they are routinely customarily provided for you?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They are provided for everyone. There is a press clipping summary for the entire mission.

MR. SWALWELL: But on a daily basis, you will receive press clippings?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: No. No, it's all done electronically for the mission.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay. But I'm asking, your email address, on a daily basis you receive press clippings as it relates to your duties?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I do, along with everyone else.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay.

I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Over to the minority if they have any additional questions.

MR. JORDAN: Ambassador, President Zelensky wins his election, I think, April 21st, 2019, overwhelmingly, and then shortly thereafter gets a call from President Trump, a congratulatory call. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I understand that happened, yes.

MR. JORDAN: And then sort of the next -- I'm looking at your timeline -- the next event is the inauguration approximately a month later, May 20th, 2019.

Did you start working on -- I mean, based on the 8, 9 hours you've been here, you've talked about your focus was getting a second call and an official meeting between the Presidents.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: My preference would have been just to go right to a meeting, but when I found out that the meeting was going to be problematic as it kept getting

delayed, I pushed for a call at a minimum.

MR. JORDAN: Yeah. And I think you described it as you wanted to arrange a working phone call.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: The congratulatory call was probably a very short, "great job, talk to you soon."

MR. JORDAN: We've all got them.

So did you start working on that pretty soon in this whole continuum, as you've described it? Did you start like late April, early May, start, like, you know, we need to get these guys together?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think the delegation when we came back from the inauguration -- are you talking about after the inauguration or between the election and the inauguration?

MR. JORDAN: I'm talking whenever you decided it was time to get a working -- to arrange a working phone call.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think -- I don't know how much activity we really had between the election and the inauguration, because the inauguration was fairly soon after the election.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. So is it fair to say you started thinking about putting together the second phone call between President Trump and President Zelensky when you had the

delegation there in Ukraine on May 20th, 2019, for President Zelensky's inauguration?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I think we really started that in earnest after the briefing with President Trump on the 23rd.

MR. JORDAN: Was there any discussion on May 20th, 2019, with the folks who were part of the delegation in Ukraine at the inauguration?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: About a meeting or a phone call?

MR. JORDAN: Yes.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: There may have been. I mean, we had a lot of dinners and lunches, and it probably came up, but I don't remember specifically.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. And, again, and the folks at the inauguration were Mr. Perry, Secretary Perry, Senator Johnson, Ambassador Volker, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, those were the individuals that were part of the delegation?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: And myself.

MR. JORDAN: And yourself.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. And so you think you started talking about we need to get these guys together on a working phone call and at some kind of meeting, you think that started May 20th?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: It could have.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. Then the next meeting is at the

White House a few days later, where you're debriefing and you're talking about the situation, what happened a few days earlier at the inauguration, correct?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: All right. And you started to talk then to President Trump and amongst yourselves again about the idea to get this phone call, get this meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, we only had the one conversation with President Trump, which, as I testified, didn't go very well, when he said talk to Rudy.

MR. JORDAN: Right.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Then we regrouped afterwards and said we need to really start pushing for the meeting or the phone call, because then we found out 3 or 4 days later that an invitation had been issued, which was unusual, considering President Trump's attitude toward Ukraine, that he would issue an invitation.

MR. JORDAN: Okay. So then I get to -- and that was -- and was everyone in agreement?

Everyone wanted this phone call to happen starting clear back May 20th at the inauguration. The President didn't want it.

MR. LUSKIN: Who do you mean by everyone, so we can be clear?

MR. JORDAN: Let me say it this way. Let's just jump to

the July 10th meeting.

So you wanted a phone call.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: July 10th meeting?

MR. JORDAN: Moving ahead now.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Oh, gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

MR. JORDAN: You wanted a phone call. Ambassador Volker wanted a phone call. Ambassador Taylor wanted a phone call. Secretary Perry wanted a phone call. And you wanted a phone call with no preconditions. Is that right?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: All right. But you get to this July 10th meeting, and you made that argument, and then at the end of that paragraph in your testimony where you described that meeting, you said the NSC did not.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: And why?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: They would never really articulate it other than there's no reason to have a call.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: That was the only -- the only thing I could get out of them was: Why aren't we having this call? There's no reason to have a call.

MR. JORDAN: What I don't understand is the NSC was part of the inauguration, the delegation who was there for President Zelensky's inauguration. Lieutenant Colonel --

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Well, Mr. Vindman was there, and he was a, you know, low-level NSC person. Dr. Hill wasn't there. Ambassador Bolton wasn't there.

MR. JORDAN: Did Mr. Vindman express any reservations to a second phone call in the time you spent with him at the inauguration or any subsequent meetings or discussions you may have had with him?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't know. I didn't -- I didn't consider him to be a champion of the phone call. I thought everyone else in the delegation was a strong champion of the phone call.

MR. JORDAN: Was Mr. Vindman opposed to the phone call clear back in May? Did you get any indication of that?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't remember when he was opposed, but I think it became apparent during the meeting -- one of the meetings on June -- July 10th that he didn't think it was a good idea because there was no reason for it.

MR. JORDAN: And he hadn't expressed any concern in any other interactions you had?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Not prior to that, no.

MR. JORDAN: Not prior to that, and not at the May 20th inauguration in Ukraine?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: I don't think he -- you know, to answer your question exactly, I don't think he expressed an opinion that we should have one or that we shouldn't have one

until the July 10th meeting.

MR. JORDAN: And was Mr. Vindman -- my understanding is he was not in the May 23rd meeting at the White House.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: He was not in the Oval, correct.

MR. JORDAN: He was not in that meeting?

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Correct.

MR. JORDAN: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ambassador, I want to thank you.

MR. JORDAN: If I could ask one thing, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. JORDAN: Just before we close, I just want to ask you some questions. Do we know the schedule? Is there a deposition tomorrow?

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have released the schedule, have we not?

MR. BITAR: There's noting tomorrow.

MR. JORDAN: Nothing tomorrow, okay. And then --

MR. BITAR: There's a formal notice that has gone to all committee members and staff.

MR. CASTOR: I'm in the SCIF.

MR. BITAR: No, it was already entered earlier today.

MR. JORDAN: And can I just ask, Mr. Chairman, for next week, are there any days where there are two -- we had heard rumblings of this -- any days where there are two depositions going on the same day?

THE CHAIRMAN: I think the short answer is at the moment we think there's only one, but there are witnesses that we --

MR. NOBLE: We have noticed two for 2 days.

[6:51 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: So we have noticed two? Oh, okay.

MR. NOBLE: When we get confirmation, we will let the minority know right away.

MR. JORDAN: I'm guess I'm asking --

MR. ZELDIN: On 2 days.

MR. JORDAN: If two people agree to come the same day, I guess I'm asking are they going to be be simultaneous?

MR. GOLDMAN: You can't be in two places at once?

THE CHAIRMAN: We will have to decide if that should be the case, whether to move one of them, or whether to do them concurrently in different rooms.

MR. JORDAN: Mr. Chairman, I point out you guys have got a few more staff than we've got. So we would I think be a little reluctant to have two depositions happening at the -- simultaneously. If we could stack the -- - we're willing to stay all day.

THE CHAIRMAN: You know, I would just say, first of all, that -- let me go back to thanking the Ambassador for his willingness to answer the subpoena, and for his long testimony today. We appreciate your coming in and you are excused.

AMBASSADOR SONDLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for conducting a very pleasant hearing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 6:53 p.m., the deposition was concluded.]

PAUL
HASTINGS

robertluskin@paulhastings.com

November 4, 2019

Adam B. Schiff
Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Sworn Testimony of Ambassador Gordon Sondland

Dear Chairman Schiff:

Pursuant to Rule 8 of the 116th Congress Regulations for Use of Deposition Authority and Rule 8(e)(2)(B) of the Rules for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, please find attached the Declaration of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, which supplements his testimony of October 17, 2019. In accordance with the House and Committee rules, this letter and the attached Declaration should be included as an appendix to his sworn testimony.

Ambassador Sondland has reviewed and approved the attached Declaration and his sworn testimony. His signature on the attached Declaration shall serve, in accordance with the relevant rules, as his affirmation that he has also reviewed and approved the transcript of his testimony.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Luskin
Kwame J. Manley

PAUL HASTINGS LLP

DECLARATION OF AMBASSADOR GORDON D. SONDLAND

I, Gordon Sondland, do hereby swear and affirm as follows:

1. I have reviewed the October 22, 2019, opening statement of Ambassador William Taylor. I have also reviewed the October 31, 2019, opening statement of Tim Morrison. These two opening statements have refreshed my recollection about certain conversations in early September 2019.

2. Ambassador Taylor recalls that I told Mr. Morrison in early September 2019 that the resumption of U.S. aid to Ukraine had become tied to a public statement to be issued by Ukraine agreeing to investigate Burisma. Ambassador Taylor recalls that Mr. Morrison told Ambassador Taylor that I told Mr. Morrison that I had conveyed this message to Mr. Yermak on September 1, 2019, in connection with Vice President Pence's visit to Warsaw and a meeting with President Zelensky. Mr. Morrison recalls that I said to him in early September that resumption of U.S. aid to Ukraine might be conditioned on a public statement reopening the Burisma investigation.

3. In my October 17, 2019 prepared testimony and in my deposition, I made clear that I had understood sometime after our May 23, 2019, White House debriefing that scheduling a White House visit for President Zelensky was conditioned upon President Zelensky's agreement to make a public anti-corruption statement. This condition had been communicated by Rudy Giuliani, with whom President Trump directed Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and me, on May 23, 2019, to discuss issues related to the President's concerns about Ukraine. Ambassador Volker, Secretary Perry, and I understood that satisfying Mr. Giuliani was a condition for scheduling the White House visit, which we all strongly believed to be in the mutual interest of the United States and Ukraine.

4. With respect to the September 1, 2019, Warsaw meeting, the conversations described in Ambassador Taylor's and Mr. Morrison's opening statements have refreshed my recollection about conversations involving the suspension of U.S. aid, which had become public only days earlier. I always believed that suspending aid to Ukraine was ill-advised, although I did not know (and still do not know) when, why, or by whom the aid was suspended. However, by the beginning of September 2019, and in the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I presumed that the aid suspension had become linked to the proposed anti-corruption statement. As I said in my prepared testimony, security aid to Ukraine was in our vital national interest and should not have been delayed for any reason. And it would have been natural for me to have voiced what I had presumed to Ambassador Taylor, Senator Johnson, the Ukrainians, and Mr. Morrison.

5. Also, I now do recall a conversation on September 1, 2019, in Warsaw with Mr. Yermak. This brief pull-aside conversation followed the larger meeting involving Vice President Pence and President Zelensky, in which President Zelensky had raised the issue of the suspension of U.S. aid to Ukraine directly with Vice President Pence. After that large meeting, I now recall speaking individually with Mr. Yermak, where I said that resumption of U.S. aid would likely not occur until Ukraine provided the public anti-corruption statement that we had been discussing for many weeks. I also recall some question as to whether the public statement could come from the newly appointed Ukrainian Prosecutor General, rather than from President Zelensky directly.

6. Soon thereafter, I came to understand that, in fact, the public statement would need to come directly from President Zelensky himself. I do not specifically recall how I learned this, but I believe that the information may have come either from Mr. Giuliani or from

Ambassador Volker, who may have discussed this with Mr. Giuliani. In a later conversation with Ambassador Taylor, I told him that I had been mistaken about whether a public statement could come from the Prosecutor General; I had come to understand that the public statement would have to come from President Zelensky himself.

7. Finally, as of this writing, I cannot specifically recall if I had one or two phone calls with President Trump in the September 6-9 time frame. Despite repeated requests to the White House and the State Department, I have not been granted access to all of the phone records, and I would like to review those phone records, along with any notes and other documents that may exist, to determine if I can provide more complete testimony to assist Congress. However, although I have no specific recollection of phone calls during this period with Ambassador Taylor or Mr. Morrison, I have no reason to question the substance of their recollection about my September 1 conversation with Mr. Yermak.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the aforementioned is true.

Executed on November 4, 2019.



The Honorable Gordon D. Sondland
United States Ambassador to the European Union